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SERIOUS ADDRESS

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UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE

PREVAILING VICE OF

D R U N K E N N E S S .

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C A R L I S L E :

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King

A SERIOUS ADDRESS, &c.

THE subjects of the short essays which have of late appeared in the public papers, or otherwise, are commonly of a political nature. The writers of them deserve well of the public, who, with a pure aim to advance our civil happiness, endeavour to recommend the virtues that tend to promote it, and point out such means as they judge may alleviate our burthens.

It is certain, however, that there can be no such thing as true happiness, either private or social, while our morals are depraved. Vice contains the certain seeds of misery. The good alone are happy. A concern, therefore, for the public good; and a much more interesting concern for the salvation of our souls, should engage us not to overlook the special ground of happiness---our *reformation from vice*.

With

With a view to call the attention of my fellow citizens and professing Christians to one branch, at least, of this important subject, I lay before them a few thoughts by way of warning, against the prevailing vice of *drunkenness*.

When evils become common, they are seldom looked upon with a proper abhorrence; and custom, too often, takes off the deformity from vice. This is most remarkably the case with respect to drunkenness. It would surely fill us with astonishment, to see, for the first time, a reasonable creature in the ravings of a drunken fit; and the drunkards themselves feel a painful sense of shame for the first instances of their intoxications; but now, tho' its effects are every where observed, and its dreadful consequences acknowledged; though its nature and operation are well known and their own experience verifies the worst that can be said of it, yet multitudes suffer themselves to be overcome and ruined by it.

It would be tedious, as well as painful, even to mention particularly its mischievous effects; for there is hardly an evil to be

be dreaded in this world, or the next, but natively flows from it. It is truly, as St. James says, on another occasion, “ an unrully evil and full of deadly poison”--- It is both a natural and a moral evil, and therefore the worst of evils.

Do we not, every day, see its baneful influence on the health, reputation, estates and families of its wretched devotees?--- Poverty and wretchedness, disgrace and shame attend it wherever it goes.

Abundant experience teacheth, that it has a pernicious influence on the temper; and however some, who are entering on the practice, may sometimes appear good natured, on such occasions, yet its manifest tendency is to sour the temper, and encourage angry passions. This, among other hurtful effects of it, is mentioned by Solomon---“ Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without a cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at wine, they that go to seek mixed wine.” Prov. 23. 29. 30. And therefore he cautions in the next verses, “ Look not thou upon

the wine, when it is red ; when it giveth its colour in the cup ; when it moveth itself aright. At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”

Let me here mention a recent example of its power and mischief : that is the case of Ramage and Hanah lately executed in Franklin county for the crime of wilful murder.

Of these two, it was testified at their trial, that they were peaceable good humoured, kind and affectionate in their ordinary conversation ; but when in liquor, we find they were, through the extravagance of passion, instigated to stain their hands with the blood of their fellow creatures ; to commit that horrid crime, at the thought of which nature rises with indignation, and almost forbids the tender feelings of compassion.

Thus therefore, they die ingloriously, as victims of public justice, to cleanse the land from blood, and warn others, by the awful example, to guard against such evil courses*

And

* At their execution, they ascribed their misfortunes to this vice.

And is the warning needless? Surely no. The case of too many among us, requires a serious attention to such alarming admonitions. The good are disposed to learn and apply some useful lessons from such instances as this. They feel a painful affliction for that disgrace which it casts upon human nature, and are filled with a stronger abhorrence of vicious habits. But, alas! they who have most need, are most disinclined to take warning. They persuade themselves that there is no danger. They can't think that any of them should ever be led to such a degree of wickedness. But let none deceive themselves with a vain confidence. If they are not afraid to be drunk, they have reason to be afraid of falling into crimes as enormous as this, for which these two unhappy persons suffered. Who would have thought that one, so advanced in years, and grey with age, when the passions had lost their natural strength and keenness; when declining health and growing weakness, might have, every moment taught him to govern himself, and engaged his attention to better subjects.---

That

That such a one, at such a time, should break through all the restraints of reason and conscience, and all the ties of love, endeared by so long and tender a relation; who would have thought, I say, that such a one would arrive at so great a degree of madness, as to be guilty of the highest act of violence upon the wife of his bosom! It is most probable, that neither he nor the other, his partner in sufferings, ever thought, that their conduct would have brought them to this. There was a time when they would have tho't of such deeds with abhorrence; but alas! they ventured upon the means and the miserable consequence has ^{natively} followed. These are the ^{effects} ~~principles~~ of intemperance. The dismal effects of that destroyer of men and morals, *drunkenness*. Indulging in the intoxicating poison, the dominion of reason is gradually overthrown; the light of conscience extinguished; unruly passions assume the government, and then, we see, what madness and folly, what extravagant rage, what deeds of horror men are capable of! Never, therefore let a man, who inclines

to be drunken, presume to say, what mischief he will not do ; when he so wittully puts himself in a condition for compassing the most wicked purposes. Nay, what is he not disposed to do, when he dethrones his reason, and suffers his passions to rage without controul ?

This is one pernicious effect, among many, which commonly attends the vice of drunkenness. It not only destroys the benevolent affections, but encourages angry and turbulent passions, and leads to the greatest degeneracy which human nature is capable of. It often leads its subjects to an untimely death; and that, not only in such instances as that before mentioned, but by exposing them to accidents and dangers in a state incapable to guard against them; by poisoning their constitution and inflaming their blood; anticipating, as it were, the fire of hell, by scorching their very vitals with frequent and copious draughts of this liquid fire. O how fearful a condition *this*, for a reasonable creature to go and meet with his righteous Judge!

Such are the works of this great destroyer!

stroyer ! It goeth about, as a roaring lion ; like Satan, whose minister it is, *actually* devouring, slaying its thousands and ten thousands, and increasing the victory of death, beyond any other calamity which now befalls the unhappy children of men.

Drinkers, may be distinguished into two kinds, according to the degree of their advancement in the practice.

Of one sort are they, who may not yet have contracted a love of it, or an insatiable appetite for it. It is not yet come to have the force of a habit in them. It does not greatly prevent their attending to the business of their calling---yet they allow themselves occasionally to get drunk ; and if it is in a frolic, or what they call good company, they think it little harm.

But why should they think it little harm ? Reasonable creatures, who are always in danger of doing or suffering ill, should be always on their guard. Men, whose glory and honor it is to govern their passions, should never resign the reins, nor, for a moment, endanger their extravagance. Many instances have been, of persons, in occasional riots, perpetrating

perpetrating such deeds, as have left an indelible stain upon their names, remorse on their consciences, and filled their future lives with bitterness. Besides, it is not only dangerous, but scandalous for a man, who regards his honor and reputation, at any time, to put on the character and act the part of a fool, or a madman.

It fixes a deserved reproach upon every character, that is respectable, useful or good. That must be a great dishonor to a *gentleman*, which is so unbecoming a man. A man of business evidently loses credit and confidence, by every such fit of extravagance ; for it unfits him to attend to any rational engagements. And the purity of the Christian character is essentially injured by it, both in sight of God and man. Christians should be free from even suspicion ; much more from the gross imputation of riot and drunkenness. His profession, which obliges him to “ live soberly, righteously, and godly ;” ---to cultivate and follow those things, “ that are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and of good report, virtu-
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ous and praise worthy," is utterly inconsistent with every degree of this vice. St. Paul condemns it, as one of those works of darkness, reproachful even in the Heathen, (who yet, with greater modesty than many professing Christians, practised it only in the night) and warmly exhorts Christians against it, as utterly inconsistent with their character. ' Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in riot and drunkenness'—Rom. 13, 13.—Again, ' they that are drunken, are drunken in the night, but let us, who are of the day, be sober '—1 Thes. 5, 7. 8.

It is a practice, with which it is dangerous to have any fellowship, and against which every man should, at all times, be on his guard. Common observation shews it to have a fascinating influence, intoxicating to the moral as well as the natural powers; otherwise, so unnatural and unmanly a practice could never gain so great an ascendancy over multitudes of mankind. Every instance of it is baneful. To parley with it, is to be overcome; and these

these occasional frolics, which the vain and foolish attempt to palliate are only favorable introductions to habitual excess.

Another sort are the habitual dozers ; they in whom it is grown to a fixed habit. This is generally the case with the elder drunkards, tho' to their peculiar disgrace, some younger persons too often hasten to this last degree of vice, and rival the experienced veterans in the service : a wretched preparation for the important business of life !—This stage of it however, as may be naturally expected, is usually found among those, who are more advanced in age. It is a vice, that grows, by gradual advances, and almost imperceptible steps, to this highest pitch. By frequent and long indulgence, it gains a *liking*, then, the ascendancy, and, at last the entire command. Its influence becomes so powerful, that every thing, that is dear or worthy to man, is willingly given up for its sake. It is vain to reason with them against it, or hold up even heaven itself in opposition to it. All the motives, which influenced other men, have no weight with them. Tho' it is a most cer-

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rain and *deadly* poison, yet (strange paradox!) they cannot *live* without it. And however wise and learned, active and useful they may have been in their past life, this alters not the case; they fall equally with the meanest, a sacrifice to this destroying evil.

Alas! what lamentable examples may we recollect within our knowledge, of persons, once of great reputation, sobriety and usefulness, who, from small beginnings, unrestrained at first, have sunk into the most perfect sottishness, and been entirely lost to religion, to the world and themselves. Nay, is there a neighbourhood, far or near, which does not afford some miserable examples of this kind?—Persons, whose whole exercise and enjoyment consists in this base indulgence. Retired to their dens, like other sleepers, they are rarely seen abroad, except when their want of liquor requires their attendance at a tavern or a still-house. As soon as they appear, their shrivelled skin, their trembling nerves, and inflamed countenance betrays the mean attachment. Their conversation becomes insipid or profane.

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Their company is painful. They are spoken of only by way of reproach, and justly despised and avoided, as fit only to associate with the most unworthy of mankind.—Good men feel a mixture of pity and indignation at such unaccountable conduct—Pity, for the lamentable fall of so many useful members of society; and indignation at their determined folly in submitting to so mean and disgraceful a vice.

This picture is not exaggerated. There are too many sad evidences of the truth of it. It appears to be the native consequence of an attachment to spirituous liquors. It is so deformed, that, one would think, to be hated, it needed only to be seen, and that it should be an effectual warning to others against the approaches of that vice.

But its consequences in a moral view, are still more dreadful and lamentable.--- How sadly does it degrade the reasonable powers of man? How low does it debase those noble faculties, whereby he stands in a rank, next to the glorious Angels, in the order of creation? The understand-
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ing is darkened, conscience stupified, and reason, instead of ruling, becomes the minister of the basest appetites or furious passions. The moral faculty is injured greatly in all its operations. There is no vice more hardening. They, who are fairly engaged in it, are seldom ever reformed, but continue as vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Having resigned their souls to the government of passion, they fortify themselves against the fear of God; and religion is perverted or entirely disowned, because it condemns their beloved lust, and teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

Now, what must reason judge concerning the final state of those unhappy souls who are thus infatuated? What awful threatenings does the word of God denounce against such determined sinners? §

§ The word of God may surely be expected to have some weight with professing Christians; I therefore request such as are in danger of the fatal attachment to spirituous liquors attentively to read and consider the following passages of scripture: Rom. 8. 13.---Gal. 6. 7. 8.----Deut. 28. 19. 20.---Prov. 23. 31. 34.---Isa. 5. 11. 22. Mat. 24. 49.---Luke 21. 34.---I Cor. 5. 11.---6. 10.---Gal. 5. 21.---Eph. 5. 18.---I Pet. 4. 3.---Mat. 5. 29. 30.

These are well known, often heard, but sadly neglected, as if the divine authority was not to be respected, or his dreadful displeasure to be feared by them. If they would reason and judge as other men, or pay any attention to the admonitions of the word of God, we might hope to prevail on some to forsake this evil; but they appear to go on as if they were under the effect of that fearful sentence, "they are joined to their idols, let them alone," they seem beyond the reach of healing means, and must be given up to the force of their deadly disorder, and left to perish in their chosen folly, unless some extraordinary effort of divine grace awaken them, and snatch them as brands from the burning.

If such as these should be awakened to resolve against this vice---let them observe to forsake it immediately, at once, and entirely. They can never forsake it by degrees; their rule must be, "touch not, taste not, handle not." They must also avoid the temptations to it, if they would shew that their resolutions are sincere, or would render them effectual.---

Besides

Besides, they must not only give up the vice, but engage in practical duties, and earnest supplications for reforming grace; otherwise their own resolutions and reformations will be only as the morning cloud or early dew.

Let such as have yet the command of themselves, take warning from the miserable examples they see in the world around them, and guard against the advances of this evil. Habits are most easily corrected in the beginning. Watch therefore against the first attacks of this disorder. If you find the appetite begin to crave, or any inclination to what is more than a proper refreshment, believe yourselves in danger, and suppress the desire in time before it obtains the ascendancy. Let your minds frequently review the pernicious consequences of this vice. How it is attended with certain misery both in this and the eternal world, and fortify your souls with every argument against it.

We have all great reason to be alarmed at its prevalence at this time, and the constant advances it is making in the ru-
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in of mankind. It holds up a very painful view of the religious state of our country. It is one great sin under which our land mourneth and appears to bring divine judgments upon us. Every one who regards the happiness of the state should set himself against it, and by his example and influence endeavour to stop its growth.

It is exceedingly injurious to our civil happiness and liberty. If any number of persons capable of such mischief, should set themselves to destroy so many lives, and ruin so many estates and families, as this vice certainly does, it would surely raise a general alarm. None could think the state to be safe and happy till such robbers and murderers were effectually subdued. This shews it to be an object worthy of the notice of government, and especially of such as ours. Our state has indeed considered it as such, and imposed a small fine upon instances of drunkenness. But perhaps they ought to have done more, and inflicted some proper stigma of disgrace upon such as thus debase themselves, such as rendering them
incapable

incapable of bargaining, witnessing, and deprive them of civil privileges. This may appear severe; but surely it is not without reason, that such as degrade themselves should be degraded: that when they render themselves incapable of acting right, they should be deprived of the power of acting wrong; that when they shew themselves void of faith and honor, (for drunkards commonly lose their veracity,) they should have no confidence put in them; and that when they resign the powers of self-government they should be excluded from the privileges of governing others. These penalties could not be considered too high, especially as it is so easy, so safe and honorable to avoid them, viz. by living *soberly*, and governing themselves agreeable to the dignity of reasonable and immortal creatures.

F I N I S.