

Miscellaneous.

DENNIS AND THE PRIEST.

A DIALOGUE.

"Good morning! Dennis."

"Good morning! your Reverence."

"What is this they say of you, Dennis? I am told you have been to hear the preaching of the sowers."

"You have been told the truth, your Reverence."

"And how could you dare to go and listen to heretics?"

"Please your Reverence, God is not a heretic; and it is the Word of God, the Bible, that they read."

"Ay,—the Bible explained by a minister."

"No, your Reverence; the Bible explained by itself; for when it is allowed to speak, it explains itself without assistance from any other quarter; and in the very act of reading it, we allow it to speak."

"But, after all, the minister preaches; and he insists on your believing what he preaches?"

"No, your Reverence; the preacher tells us not to believe on his word, but when we go home to take the Bible and examine whether it contradicts or confirms what he has delivered from the pulpit."

"But, don't you see that this is a mere sham; and that you, the common people, cannot examine the Holy Scriptures, so as to judge whether they confirm or contradict what the preacher says?"

"At that rate, your Reverence, St. Luke made fools of the common people; for the preacher pointed out to us a passage in the Bible which mentions that the Bereans compared the preaching of the Apostle Paul with the Holy Scriptures; and more than that, St. Luke commends them for doing so. (Acts xvii. 11.)"

"Admirable, Master Dennis! you are quite a Doctor in Divinity! You know as much as a whole Synod of Bishops! Your decisions will be equal to those of a General Council!"

"No, your Reverence; I make no pretensions to judge for other persons; but I take the liberty of judging for myself. God inspired the Bible: I read His inspired Word, and that is all."

"But you are not able to understand it."

"The proof that I can is, that I really do understand it. I understand very well an almanac made by an ordinary man. Why should I not understand the Bible, which has God for its author? Cannot God express what he means as well as a mere mortal? Besides, the Bible, speaking of itself, says that it is 'a light.' (Ps. cxix. 105.)"

"Dennis, you are obstinate and conceited."

"Your Reverence, if he is an obstinate man who never changes his opinion, it is you who are obstinate; but as for me, I found myself in a bad road and changed for a better, that is all. I have never pretended to be infallible."

"You are very conceited to think that you know so much more than others."

"Others are not very humble in thinking that they know more than God; but it is to God and not to my fellow-men that I hold myself responsible."

"I must tell you that if you go on reasoning in this way, I shall not admit you to confession."

"I confess myself."

"Not to me, at all events!"

"No; but to God."

"To God?"

"Yes! to God, who declares in the Bible that, 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' (1 John i. 9.)"

"The Church will not marry you."

"I will get married elsewhere."

"The Church will not bury you!"

"I shall not trouble myself about my dead body, if I save my soul."

"You will be excommunicated!"

"No matter, if I am received by God."

"No prayers will be offered for you!"

"I shall pray for myself."

"No masses will be said for you to release you from Purgatory!"

"They would be of no use; for I reckon on going to Paradise."

"To Paradise, do you?"

"Yes; to Paradise."

"How do you know that?"

"Why, thus: I read in the Bible that the thief when hanging on a cross at the right hand of Jesus, after having confessed his sins to Jesus Christ, who is God, said to him, 'Lord, remember me!' And Jesus said un-

to him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' (Luke xxiii. 41-43.) If, then, a penitent malefactor could be pardoned by believing on Jesus Christ, I cannot see why, if I repent, and trust in the same Saviour, I may not equally obtain salvation; and the proof that my hope is well founded lies in what I have read in the same blessed book, that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' (John iii. 16.) But as I make a part of the world here spoken of, it follows, that if I believe, I shall be saved."

"But while you are waiting to go to Paradise, you must live in this world, and I tell you plainly, that you will lose your livelihood by joining these heretics. No one will have anything to do with you."

"I trust in Him who gives us 'day by day our daily bread;' and if God be for me, what can all those do who are against me?"

"You will be a laughing-stock to everybody."

"And what will that signify? Was not Jesus Christ mocked and set at nought?"

"Everybody will shut their doors against you!"

"Jesus Christ had not where to lay his head."

"You will be called an apostate!"

"Was not St. Paul the greatest of apostates at his conversion?"

"Everybody will take pleasure in refusing to do you a kindness!"

"The world persecuted the Master, and therefore may well persecute His disciples; and the more I am persecuted for my faith, the more I shall feel that I am truly a disciple of Jesus Christ."

"Well! we shall see how long you will hold out! First of all, no one will give you any work."

"And what next?"

"No one will admit you under their roof."

"And what next?"

"No one will have anything to do with you, either in buying or selling."

"And what next?"

"No one will receive you into their society."

"So then the whole world will conspire against me?"

"Certainly!"

"And who will be at the head of the conspiracy?"

"Who! who! what does that signify?"

"At all events, whoever he may be, you may tell him that he is not a Christian, for Christ commands us to forgive offences, while this man indulges revenge. Jesus commands men to love one another, and this man appears quite disposed to hate me. Should he happen to be a priest, you may tell him that his prototypes were the members of the Sanhedrim who, through hatred, condemned Jesus to death. Should he be an Ultramontane, you may tell him that I am astonished at nothing done by him and by those who invented the Inquisition. Lastly, should it be yourself, be assured that your revengeful spirit is to me the best proof that you are not in the truth. Christ said, 'Forgive,' and you take vengeance. Christ said, 'Teach all nations,' and you refuse even to let them read the Bible. Christ said, 'Freely ye have received, freely give,' (Matt. x. 8:) and you sell,—not, indeed, the Gospel, for that you conceal,—but you sell your masses, your prayers, your dispensations, your rosaries, your tapers, your indulgences, your baptisms, your interments; but as for me, I can make shift to do without any of your wares, while I apply to that God who gives Heaven gratuitously."

"Gratuitously!"

"Yes, gratuitously! and this it is that vexes you! For when a blessing is bestowed gratuitously, the concurrence of those who sell is not wanted. Yes, gratuitously! this one word is ruinous to all your schemes. God gives, and you sell. God pardons, and you punish. God loves, and you hate. How can you expect that we should not go to God, or wonder that we do not come to you? But act towards me just as you please; I have learnt not to fear those who can kill the body; but only to fear those who can destroy the soul; in other words, I stand in no awe of you."

"You are an insolent fellow."

"I am not; but I have the courage to speak the truth."

"You are impious."

"I have been so, while bending the knee before images of wood or stone; but I have ceased to be so, since I have believed in the

living God, and trusted only in my Saviour."

"You are a miserable wretch."

"Yes, a miserable sinner; but a humble sinner, I trust, whom God has pardoned."

"You will always be a —."

"What I shall be, I do not know, but I know what I wish to be. I wish for the future to live in purity, because it was precisely my sins that crucified the Saviour. I wish to be sincere, just, and charitable, because Jesus has been so good as to give me everything. Allow me to tell you what kind of person I am. When persons love me I love them in return; when they do me a favour I wish to return it twofold; the more generous others are towards me, the more grateful I feel. Well! and has not God been generous to me more than I have words to express? He has granted me pardon, and heaven, and eternity. Thus my heart bounds with joy, and I am ready to do all that God requires of me; but what he requires of me is most delightful. It is to love him, and to love my brethren,—to love even you, Reverend Sir."

"I do not want your love."

"I shall not the less pray for you."

"I do not want your prayers."

"See the difference between us, your Reverence. I love you, and you hate me. I offer you my prayers, you refuse me yours. But Jesus Christ has said, 'By their fruits ye shall know them: do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?' (Matt. vii. 16.) Judge now, Reverend Sir! which of us, you or I, is the disciple of Jesus Christ!"—*London Bulwark.*

A CRY FROM INDIA.

That the grog-shops exert a most demoralizing influence upon the community—that they generate poverty, degradation and crime, is universally admitted. Why then is the open and formal sanction of Government given to these shops? Why does it legalize a business which is fruitful only of evil—a business which is confessedly hostile to the welfare of the community?

Are these grog-shops licensed out of deference to the wishes of the native population? No. The Hindu and Mohammedan population of India generally regard the traffic in intoxicating drinks as unlawful and wicked; and it is felt that those who can engage in it must be lost to virtue and to shame. In their view, the keeper of a grog-shop is one of the most depraved and debased specimens of humanity—a fit associate for keepers of brothels, profligates, and thieves.

Are the grog-shops, then, licensed with a view to revenue? Such is not the avowed object of Government. But, by the great majority of respectable natives, "the whole license system is regarded as a cruel, heartless device for extracting money from the people. It is felt that the government, in its shortsighted desire for gain, is willing to open the flood-gates of crime and ruin, if it can only derive a revenue therefrom." The opinion that the revenue is the grand motive for sustaining the license system prevails among Europeans and even among the servants of Government. In proof of these statements, pages might be filled with quotations from the English and the vernacular press.

What, then, is the avowed object of Government in licensing the grog-shops? In reply to the Bombay Memorial on the spread of Intemperance, Government stated (October, 1851) that "their object is not to obtain a revenue from the sale of intoxicating liquors and drugs, to repress their use as much as possible." This is an explicit acknowledgment that the influence of these things is pernicious, else why should Government seek to "repress their use?" Grog shops and opium shops are, then, an admitted evil—an evil with which the license system professes to grapple. It does not attempt wholly to eradicate the evil, but it seeks to regulate, and "as far as possible" to repress it. It is maintained that the object in view is not gain, but the repression of the traffic, and such is the ground which the apologists of the license system generally assume.

The effort to repress grog-shops and intemperance by means of the license system has, however, in India at least, signally failed. Since the introduction of English rule with its license system, grog-shops have increased an hundred fold, and intemperance with all its attendant moral and physical ills, is coming in like a flood among the native population. The Bombay Memorial on the spread of Intemperance, which was signed by a large number of the leading merchants, many in-

fluential natives, and by seventeen chaplains and missionaries, declares that "previous to the establishment of English rule, the Marathi country was inhabited by a comparatively temperate people; but since then, intemperance has increased at an alarming rate, and is still rapidly increasing. Liquor-shops are yearly being opened where formerly none existed, &c." The memorial of the Sirdars and native gentry of Poona also states, that "the number of liquor-shops is rapidly augmenting." And the same is true of other parts of India. The *Calcutta Englishman*, speaking of Bengal, recently said:—

"There is not a greater reproach to the British Government than the deterioration which the public morals have undergone under its sway from this cause. To the object of increasing the revenue, all other considerations have been systematically sacrificed. Under the Mohammedan Government, dealing in strong drink was an offence promptly and severely punished; under the English, the sale is everywhere encouraged."

The *Hindu Intelligencer* confirms this view, saying:—

"Of all the vices which Europeans have brought with them to this country, intemperance in drinking is perhaps the worst. A few years ago the use of wine was considered by the Hindus in general as direputable, and pernicious to all temporal and religious interests." But now drunkenness prevails not merely in the large towns, "it has spread into the interior; and there is scarcely a single village that has not its grog-shop. Distilleries and licensed establishments for the sale of pernicious and inflammatory spirits are to be everywhere met with. They are yearly being multiplied," &c.

Similar testimony in abundance might be adduced from all parts of India and Ceylon, showing that the effort to arrest the progress of intemperance by means of the license system has been a complete failure.

The license system in India is, then, powerless for good. But its influence for evil is mighty. It has done much to remove the disgrace attached to the use of intoxicating drinks; and by throwing the sanction of Government over the keepers of grog-shops, it has enabled them on all sides to spread out temptations to intemperance in spite of the wishes of the people. As we have shown on previous occasions, a very general and decided feeling of opposition to the introduction of these shops has existed throughout the Marathi country, and probably in a somewhat less degree throughout India. The traffic is by the more respectable classes, regarded as infamous and pernicious; and the man who on his responsibility, without any Government sanction, should commence setting up grog-shops in the quiet villages, would arouse the indignation of the people and be treated as a public enemy. But the contractor, in virtue of his connexion with Government, appears among them as an authorized functionary; his business, accursed though it be, is sanctioned by the highest authority, so that to contend with him is to contend with Government. Thus all hope of successful resistance is taken away; the people are compelled to tolerate the hateful, blighting nuisance, and to see a flood of intemperance pour over the land. The contractor, who is often a stranger in the district, makes the most of his contract, resorting to every expedient to increase the sale of intoxicating drinks, and caring but little for the odium which he has to encounter. This indeed is for the most part transferred to the Government, which, as is supposed, upholds the traffic for the sake of revenue. Thus grog-shops are multiplied, and the work of demoralization goes on apace. And thus it is that the license system, instead of checking, increases the evil. It invests the retail traffic with a degree of respectability which it could not otherwise possess. It stamps the public approval upon that which would otherwise be infamous, and encourages the grog-seller to persevere in a business which, but for this, he might be compelled to abandon.

The views just expressed are those which the Hindu and Mohammedan population of India, with the exception of the lowest and most degraded classes, almost universally entertain. To these views the native press freely and constantly gives utterance. And that these views are correct is the avowed opinion of very many Europeans who have had the best means of judging and who feel the deep-