

The Visitor's Pulpit.

Notes of a Sermon on Temperance.

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The subject, "Who would have thought it, or who is responsible?" and the texts chosen were:

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul doth he not know it, and shall not he render to every man according to his works."—Prov. xxiv. 12.

And in connection therewith:

"But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in times past, and it hath been testified to his owner and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death."—Exod. xxi. 28, 29.

The preacher commenced by saying: As the times now are, many will say, We have enough to do to shoulder our own responsibilities and look out for self-interest. The selfish man saith, "I know when to shut my eyes, I am not such a fool as to act the Good Samaritan to every stranger. Blood runs thicker than water, and self stands first, let others look out for themselves." But friends, in the light of the texts before us, are we clear of responsibility?

First of all it is pointed out that we are not acquitted in God's sight by merely saying, "Behold we knew it not." He "that pondereth the heart" considers our duty in another light; "shall he not render to every man according to his works?"

Next to the destructive and soul-tormenting worm that dieth not, may be mentioned the "worm of the still," what madness, what destruction hath its poisoned breath wrought? Its deadly fumes will bring the strong man down as surely as the push and thrust of an angry ox. Its coil is more to be feared than the deadly binding of the Boa Constrictor. Beware of the social quicksands, many are sinking slowly, but sinking surely. Much evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart. And I shall be glad if some, after pondering my words, shall conclude wisely, as did a man after reading a lecture on the same subject; he said when he read it over twice,— "this man is a fool or I am." Carefully reading it again he said "I was a fool!" and never tasted a drop of ardent spirits afterwards. And it is our duty to look at this giant evil intemperance. Our text plainly declares that to say "we knew it not," will not justify or wash us from all responsibility, for this ox has a long time been known and feared for his thrusting and destructive qualities.

Think of the awful cost of keeping up this tormentor. England's yearly drink bill is £140,000,000 sterling; but gold and silver and figures fail to set forth the cost. Talk not of Juggernaut—the car Bacchus drawn forward by thousands of willing slaves, is to-day crushing out precious lives, and mangling the hopes and love of untold numbers. And their blood and misery cry for justice and deliverance. "Fine feathers make fine birds" do they? then it is time we strip off the tinsel so as to judge the matter fairly.

Bacchus is a thief and a robber. Let us have naught to do with his immense losing bank, it is a deception and a fraud. Why nurse a serpent?—lose money, time, health, business, character, conscience and friends, and also the soul too often, for it is included in the deposit for strong drink? "Give me drink if I am damned for it!" said one maddened by the accursed thirst kindled but not quenched by Rum! "Strong drink," judging from results, we should think it weakening, unless the staggering walk and palsied hand are a sign of its great strength. To make intoxicating drinks in the United Kingdom the trade destroys yearly 88,420,525 bushels of grain; in the United States 70,000 bushels more. What a waste of useful food! Calculating that a bushel of wheat or barley of 53 lbs. yields 40 lbs. of flour, this will make 60 lbs. of bread, the above quantity would give over 130 2lb. loaves of bread to every family of five persons in the States, reckoning 8,000,000 families. Placed as paving stones they would pave a road 30 feet wide and 1,800 miles long.

If the grain consumed in the United Kingdom were made into bread, one year's supply would employ 100 bakers, each baking 100 loaves an hour for 10 hours daily for 35 years, and it would take a man with his team carrying a load of five hundred loaves away every half hour for 360 years to take all away. These illustrations are only given to demonstrate what is meant by waste, when we speak of millions of bushels of grain consumed in the manufacture of intoxicating drink.

Who would have thought it? who is responsible? There is said to be a spring in China, the properties of which are such that it transforms every man who drinks

thereof into a villain. We would not thus harshly speak of every man who loves or drinks a social glass, neither would we unchristianize every man who handles or tastes the same. But to all we would say, "Beware! note the spring, follow the stream, and judge by the results, whether it be good or bad."

We think intoxicating liquors have been rightly called "liquid crime," and the records prove that this ox has been known to push with its drinking horn very cruelly in the past. In Boston, of 895 complaints at the police court, 400 charges were against common drunkards. The U. S. Prison Discipline Report gives 125,000 criminals during the year, and of that number 93,750 were more or less excited and drawn into evil and trouble by drink.

What shipwreck of human and domestic happiness is wrought; truly this evil is like the angry ox, trampling and rending the innocent with the guilty, as it madly rushes at those who provoke it and set it loose.

The drink traffic to-day is the ruin of many. This upas tree dwarfs virtue and fosters vice.

But who would have thought it? who is responsible? Has not this troublesome "black ox" been known to push with his horn in times past? Then we, as honest men, should chain him, for the safety of others and try and keep him in for the sake and safety of others as well as our own welfare.

Some men's fortunes are built of blood and tears. Yet their recompense shall be in strict justice, Prov. xxi. 12: "according to his works." And it might be well to read and ponder the following passages from the Bible, they throw some light upon the subject.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. Prov. xxii.

29. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath wounds without a cause? who hath redness of eyes?

30. They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Here we have the observations of a wise man concerning the benefits gained by those who love and tarry long at the wine, and seek the cup which by cunning mixing has been made more potent. And is the verdict in accordance with the expectations of those who drink to drown dull care? "Who hath woe? They that tarry long at the wine;" "Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? They that tarry long at the wine." By these it is plainly set forth that neither the quantity consumed, nor the strength thereof, can give deliverance from trouble, but the rather increase it; for "Who hath wounds without a cause?" "Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long, they that go to seek mixed wine."

31. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright:

32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

This passage shows how drink inflames lust, and destroys purity of thought and expression.

34. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth down upon the top of a mast.

35. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

What a reckless, helpless creature a man becomes when once rendered insensible by the thrust of this ox. The poor confused brain heeds not the danger, but saith, "I will seek it yet again."

Isaiah v:

11. Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

22. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drinks!

Isaiah, an inspired prophet makes no exception. Those who are strong witted and strong headed, and who can render their drinking companions helplessly drunk and make them the laughing-stock of fools, must remember that they too must give an account of wasted time, and strength, and it is vain glorying when a man boasts because he is a better seasoned slave. Rather let him consider what saith the Scripture. Hab. ii. 15.

15. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look upon his nakedness!

And Paul puts down the sin of imbibing a little freely, as some call drinking and

drunkenness, among a very unpleasant looking list, and ends with very solemn admonition. Gal. v.:

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, seditions, heresies,

21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

And it will be profitable just to read some of his words of warning in times past. 1 Cor. vi:

10. Nor thieves nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Phil. iii.

18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19. Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things. Rom. xiii.

13. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

With such texts before us can we "Forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain. If thou sayest,—behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?" Permit me to read a few extracts which have come under my own notice, and God grant that we may not excuse ourselves in the use and circulation of intoxicants with, "Who would have thought when I gave the lad the first glass the scene would end thus?"

Take this illustration from a police court:

"Johnson, the officer says you were drunk, and that you haven't drawn a sober breath for a week. How is that, Johnson?"

"Yer honor," said Johnson as he dropped one arm over the rail and leaned back heavily upon the policeman who supported him by the shoulder, "yer honor it's true. I've been drunk for a week as you say, an' I haven't got a word to say to defend myself. I've been in this ere court I guess a hundred times before, an every time before I've asked yer honor to let me off light. But this time I don't have no fear. You can send me up for ten days or ten years, it's all one now." As he spoke he brushed away a tear with his hat, and when he paused, he coughed, a dry hacking cough, and he drew his tattered coat closer to his throat. "When I went up before," he continued, "I always counted the days and the hours 'till I'd come off. This time I'll count the blocks to the potter's field. I'm most gone, Judge." He paused and looked down upon his almost shoeless feet.

"When I was a little country boy, my mother used to say to me; 'Charlie, if you want to be a man, never touch liquor, an' I'd answer 'No, mother, I never will.' If I'd kept that promise, you an' me would'n have been so well acquainted, Judge. If I could only be a boy again for half a day; if I could go into the school house, just once more and see the boys and girls as I used to see them in the old days, I could lay down here and die happy, but it's too late! Send me up, Judge. Make it ten days or for life. It don't make no difference now. One way would be as short as short as the other. All I ask now is to die alone. I've been in crowded tenements for years. If I can be alone for a little while before I go, I'll die contented."

The case of poor lost Charlie Johnson is being duplicated all over our country. God has said, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

"Step by step he leads his victim To the verge of dread despair; Hurls him o'er the brink of ruin; Laughs and leaves him helpless there. Widowed hearts and homes deserted; Helpless children, orphans made; What a picture! God of mercy, Let the cruel tide be staid."

Thus "When the spider has drank the very life-blood of his victims, and bound and crushed them with his hellish cords, he flings them from his presence, battered, ruined, degraded, ghastly, and lost; while the unwary still crowd in, invited in honeyed words, and welcomed with the blandest smiles. The old, old question is repeated again and again, it is addressed young man to you—will you walk into my parlour."

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall." Prov. iv. 14, 15.

Another illustration of not considering this matter of responsibility aright.

"Fine beer this, my dear, really excellent. I think we cannot do better, at present, than get it as we want it; and besides, if we don't keep a barrel in the house, the

servants won't expect it—and that's a temptation removed, you see." So every night Mrs. — reminds Susan, just before nine o'clock, to fetch the supper-ale from the "Alexandra;" and when one night Susan talked rather loud, and the next night was really impertinent, and the next was a long time out, and finally had to be dismissed for "taking too much," the mistress and master agreed that perhaps it was not a very safe thing to send her every night to a public bar; but they "never thought of it."

We have the greatest respect for the doctors, and tully believe from actual experience that there are times and circumstances when it is right and needful to order it as any other medicine, but the following shows how great the need of caution even here:

"In your reduced state, my dear sir, I must order you a glass of port wine twice a day, and try bitter beer with your dinner and I hope we shall soon see you yourself again. I know you are an abstainer, but this is a case of necessity, so take my advice."

Some months after when the doctor had to attend the same case for incipient intoxication, and was reminded by his trembling wife that he had never cared for drink before and that through his orders had commenced this craving for it,—he shrugged his shoulders and assured her that had he known he was so susceptible, he would have ordered less and told him when to stop—but he "NEVER THOUGHT OF IT."

A little girl has at the Band of Hope or Help One Another Society, learned the evils of intemperance, and says to herself, "I'll never drink—never! She is met at the door by her mother with a jug—"Do darling run for some beer." A look of remonstrance is noted. But the mother dispels the doubt and resolution by—"All right my child, I know you belong to the Help One Another Band—but we have company—get me two quarts, quick." Some time after that child was missing from home, the mother wept bitterly but vainly and the beginning of the evil was traced to the night when she waited at the bar to be served. "Who would have thought it?"

Death had snatched away all but one and he was the idol and delight of that home, a favorite with the school-master and called by his companions "a jolly good fellow." He was petted and admired at the table by the friends who often dined and supped there. From home he went to college; in his trunk was placed a Bible, and "God bless you," was said by a fond mother at the parting, but no warning word was uttered against the social evils and temptations that would beset his pathway; his city connections were highly respectable and he was received with admiration into their circle, and soon the habit learned at home was carried to excess, and two years after an old man is seen weeping beside a newly made grave, and these bitter words are spoken: "Oh, that you had not seen it at home, or at least you had been warned, but who would have thought it would have come to this?"

How many by the taunting jeer have caused another to drink and take the first step across the line of sobriety, and then when they had seen the subject of their ridicule go down to a drunkard's grave, too late they say it would have been better not to have tempted him. But who is responsible? Awful question when we contemplated the words of Deut. xxix. 19, 20: "Saying I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

Who is responsible? are we clear? have we not a long time known that the ox has been wont to push with his horn in times past? men, women and children have been cruelly wounded, and when I say women I speak advisedly, a case very similar to the following which I have extracted as an illustration came under my own observation when visiting England last summer:

A husband is sitting alone in his back parlour, his head is in his hand and he is in deep thought, when the door opens and his three little motherless children enter to say good night to papa. He clasped them one by one in his arms—they ask as they did last night and the night before: "Where is mamma? When will mamma come back?" He can't speak but motions for them to leave, and as the servant takes them up stairs and they are still asking the question, his heart echoes where, where? And he lives over again the last eighteen months, and thinks of all the steps down from the morning when he and the doctor persuaded her to try a more generous living and not to be so afraid, and when he soon after sent in for her use a dozen bottles of strong old port and Bass's bottled ale; and he remembers all the fears which

sprung up some weeks later that she was going beyond the doctor's orders, and that the gentle remonstrance and sharp reply and the excited manner, and the wondering look—and then the remonstrance again, so carefully worded but angrily received, and the whisper in the kitchen, and the shyness of friends, and then the revelation of it all! and then the disappearance.

Oh! when will people consider their individual responsibility in this matter, and like Paul of old encourage those who seek to avoid even the appearance of evil by abstinence. Is it not time that ministers, teachers, doctors, parents and all Christians of every rank and creed fairly considered this great question of seeking every man his brother's good? can we cling to a mere indulgence, which is working so much mischief, and excuse ourselves by saying, "I did not think of it, I am not responsible?" Read the texts again and pray for right decision.

Now finally, concerning drink and drunkenness, "Who is responsible?" In the case of a guilty knowledge of the ox being wont to push, the owner was liable to be put to death and the ox destroyed. Is there less responsibility resting upon those who make and let loose upon the public strong drink and seek to flood a community with the same?

With respect to the honesty and righteousness whereof I would say "judge for yourself." Mr. Moody told a distiller to do what ever he did for the glory of God, and said he "if you get down and pray about a barrel of whiskey, and say for instance when you sell it: O Lord God let this whiskey be blessed to the world," it is probably honest.

My unconcerned friend, make not sport of the drunkard, despise him not for his weakness and sin. Remember in God's sight there are other sins just as vile, sins that are winked at among men, and thine unbelief will as surely keep thee out of heaven, unless thou repent.

And you, poor tempted struggling one, we will not condemn you. Rather forget your vain and broken resolutions of the past, and remember Jesus is still "MIGHTY TO SAVE." He can deliver Satan's captives, He is able to "Set at liberty them that are bruised." Have no more to do with the drink that "mocks," "deceives," and "bites at the last."

And for safety "flee for your life" leave the City of destruction behind you and trust in the blood that cleanseth us from all sin. Trust not yourself, but trust him "who is able to keep you from falling" and by his grace determined to leave the Tempter and his charming cup.

And verily the God of all grace will help and bless you.

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