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Joseph Watson

OBSERVATIONS

ON

THE CUSTOMARY USE

OF

Distilled Spirituous Liquors,

PARTICULARLY ADDRESSED TO

THE INHABITANTS OF PENNSYLVANIA,

OF ALL DENOMINATIONS;

AND ALSO TO

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES GENERALLY.

BY JOHN WATSON.

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OSBORN PATENT

THE CUSTOMARY USE

Distilled spirituous liquors



BY JOHN WILSON

PREFACE.

SOME parts of the following observations were first published in a periodical paper, called the Evening Fire Side, in the year 1805, and soon after were taken into the Port Folio, and other papers.

Some new arrangements have been made in the work, and some additions thereto. It is now offered to the public, for more general usefulness, in the form of a pamphlet, and affectionately recommended to the serious perusal of all ranks and classes of people.

If some of the sentiments and illustrations should be thought new, and expressed in the language of plainness and impartiality, it is hoped that the importance of the subject will be a sufficient apology.

Confident that the patronage of a generous public, can in no instance be better employed, than in the encouragement of every laudable attempt to investigate the causes of human misery; and thence to illustrate the most probable means of diminishing the sufferings of our fellow creatures; the author of the following pages is induced to solicit the attention of all who have their own real welfare, and that of the community at heart, more attentively to consider a subject, which involves in its calamitous effects the comforts and happiness of multitudes of the human race.

It is presumed that in almost every neighbourhood, or within the sphere of every man's acquaintance and observation, there are persons of various descriptions, who are enslaved by the deliterious habit of using ardent spirits, in a greater or less degree ; and it is also known, that from small beginnings in vice and immorality, some have thereby proceeded to great lengths, to the ruin of themselves and families, and often to the injury of their neighbours. If the exertion of individuals could be directed towards arresting the progress of this mighty destroyer, there is no doubt but that, under the divine blessing, many might be rescued from its destructive effects, and instead of being nuisances to society, might pass their days in comfort to themselves and families, and be useful in the world.

Thus, if men would but look around themselves, and consider how much they might benefit their poor neighbours by acting as friends and guardians to those, who appear to have no might of their own to withstand the torrent of custom and habit in the use of strong drink, every one might find employment in some way or other tending to promote the welfare and happiness of his fellow creatures.

Can there be any person so ungenerous that he would refuse to assist in raising his neighbours creature out of a pit, or to divert it from certain danger ; and can it be, that less regard should be shown to the interest and welfare of an immortal fellow creature, than the beast that perisheth.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTION OF THE USE OF SPIRITS INTO THE COLONIES ON
DIFFERENT OCCASIONS, PROMOTED BY A VARIETY OF MISTAKEN
PREJUDICES AND OPINIONS.

IT may be difficult to eradicate opinions commonly received, especially when they go to support a practice or custom generally followed. But the many valuable reformations from gross errors that have heretofore prevailed in the world, affords a plain evidence of the fallibility of human reason, in having freely submitted to what was certainly wrong.

THE first adventurers who settled in Pennsylvania, and parts adjacent, having been generally accustomed to the use of beer or ale, in Europe, were possessed of a habitual aversion to the drinking of water. They apprehended that the air of this hot climate was unhealthy, and that the water contained some noxious quality. In these opinions they were confirmed, by observing that some persons died suddenly, who had drunk freely of cold water, when oppressed with heat and fatigue; and that severe fevers and agues prevailed in the autumnal season.

Hence, through the influence of erroneous prejudices and opinions, the early settlers of this country adopted the practice which prevailed in the West Indies, and introduced the common use of rum, imported from thence, or of an inferior kind, from New England, distilled out of molasses.

It is admitted that cold water, drunk in large quantities, when the body is overheated, is indeed hurtful; but spirituous liquors are not a proper preventive when brought into common use; and both in a physical and moral respect, they are highly improper.

The natural small-pox being frequently severe, and the most proper treatment of the disorder altogether mistaken; rum administered in various forms, was esteemed absolutely necessary for the unhappy patients. The nurses and attendants in all disorders, were recommended to use drams, either raw, or sweetened, or mixed with bitters, as antidotes against offensive and infectious smells.

In the early settlement of the country, agues, and fevers of the season were common in the latter part of summer, and in the fall of the year; and either for the purpose of relief or prevention, spikenard, centaury, and other articles infused in spirits, were much used as domestic medicine. Hence an idea of the medicinal usefulness of spirits, almost universally prevailed among the first settlers of this land.

The sentiments of the people being thus predisposed, common opinion, common custom, generosity, and hospitality, all concurred with the natural influence of habit, to favour the general use of spirits; and from the combined effect of these causes, spirituous liquors became an indispensable article in hay-time and harvest,

at raisings of buildings, at frolicks of every kind, and also at vendues: and as it had been customary in the parent country to give hot and spiced wine, or ale and cakes, at funerals; so, hot rum and water, sweetened with sugar, became the substitute here.

All this free use of spirituous liquors, had a powerful effect on the minds and manners of the people, who being more or less inflamed, and elevated with strong drink, frequently behaved in a rude and disorderly manner; and this becoming common, was the less regarded as a blemish of character. Actual drunkards and sots were alone considered as transgressors, and every inferior degree was deemed only the necessary use.

Thus common opinion and common custom, ruled the subject with sovereign authority, and without much interruption, until the large quantities given at vendues, became so manifest an evil in its consequences, that petitions were presented to the legislature, and an act was passed on the subject in the year 1750, prohibiting the practice of giving spirits in future, under a penalty of four pounds for the first offence, and for the second, and every other offence, the sum of five pounds. But for many years, the good effects intended by the law were frustrated, and the penalties evaded, by adjourning the vendue, to drink rum. The reason of this was, because the power of habit had become so strong, that the general opinion of the people did not then sufficiently coincide with the intention of the law, to render it efficient. To such a height had this abominable practice arisen, that an instance might be mentioned, where twenty gallons of rum were actually drank, when less than two hundred pounds worth of goods were sold.

In one year, nearly a hogshead of spirits, by the gallon and quart, has been sold by a shopkeeper to one man for his own use. But even in cases of this kind which have occurred, opinion and custom have afforded a ready excuse for the real evil in selling, and charged the blame wholly to the unhappy persons, who became victims to their own intemperance.

It was certainly owing to the want of a due regard to right principles, that these evils were permitted to arrive at such an extent, before a remedy was applied.

The sober and more considerate part of all religious societies, being affected with concern, on account of the inconsistency of giving spirits at funerals, and the society of Friends taking such measures about the year 1760, as in a short time put an end to the practice among themselves, the example has been pretty generally, but not universally, followed by others: and at places where spirits continue to be used, the effects are obviously unsuitable, and unbecoming the nature of these solemn occasions.

As a very extraordinary and striking instance of the influence of custom, in full contradiction to the dictates of decency and common sense, it may be proper here to relate, that in some parts of the state of New York, it has been usual, in conformity with ancient custom, for the company attending a funeral, to return after the interment, to the late dwelling-house of the deceased, and perhaps to other houses in the neighbourhood, employed for the purpose, where a plentiful dinner being provided, with wine, spirits, pipes, and tobacco, the scene of mourning soon became changed into the opposite extreme; and the ensuing evening, and sometimes two or three days, were spent in the

usual manner of intemperate indulgence. And what is still more surprising, persons in making their wills frequently assigned a certain specific sum to defray the expense of their own funerals, with an intention that they should be conducted in the customary way.

This appears, at first view, to be the extent of inconsistency in the practice of a people professing christianity, or aiming at the useful improvements of civilization : but the whole may be no more than some remains of the rude and ignorant manners and customs of antiquity, not yet reduced to the standard of use and propriety. And here we might fairly state the question, What better authority is there for the use that is now made of spirituous liquors on many other occasions, than merely the customs and manners of former times, which the experience of their effects do by no means recommend ?

The above practices at funerals are recited, principally for the purpose of illustration ; but as more light has prevailed by degrees, and clergymen have refused to officiate at interments designed to be conducted in such a manner ; it may be stated with pleasure, that more decent order, and suitable decorum, is now generally observed among the better rank of society, who regard strict discipline of conduct as a necessary part of religious profession.

SECTION II.

CHECK TO THE GROWTH OF THIS EVIL IN VARIOUS INSTANCES,
TENDING TO DEMONSTRATE THE PRACTICABILITY AND ADVAN-
TAGE OF DECLINING THE USE OF SPIRITS.

WHEN a selfish spirit prevails in the minds of the people, it has a tendency to produce darkness, and manifold confusion in the world; but a better understanding of things, and more regular order are the natural effects of pursuing those measures that evidently promote the general interest and happiness of mankind.

IN the time of the revolutionary war, when spirituous liquors of any kind were not easily obtained, many sober persons, who had been attached to the use of those liquors, only by custom, found by experience that they were not only not unnecessary, but in every respect were actually hurtful. Since that period the number of farmers, labourers, tradesmen, and others, who either wholly or in great part have declined the use of spirits, has gradually increased, to a degree far beyond what is generally known or apprehended.

From the sensible benefits which such persons have found by the change resulting to themselves, their families, their hired labourers, and the business in which they have been employed, they can individually unite in recommending their example herein to general imitation.

Spirituous liquors are not now generally given at vendues as formerly; and the consequent improvement in the behaviour of the people at such public gatherings,

affords a certain evidence of the great advantage of sobriety.

At several iron works in the United States, where much business has been done, no kind of spirits were used by the workmen. They were wholly banished from the place, and sufficient experience has fully proved that large quantities of iron may be made without the use of ardent spirits, and with much greater advantage and satisfaction both to the labourer and employer. On the contrary, many proprietors of iron works have failed because of drunkenness and disorders prevailing among the workmen; and many of the workmen themselves have been ruined by intemperance and bad habits, and their families reduced to want.

The practice of drinking spirituous liquors by the workmen in paper mills, in Pennsylvania, was formerly universal, being reduced by ancient custom into a regular system; but a reformation being begun a few years since, by some individuals, the subject has been taken up by an Association of Master Paper Makers. The valuable effects of their influence has fairly shown, that great things may be done by adopting right principles, and pursuing proper measures to support them.

Every friend of mankind must be pleased with the following communication from a respectable member of that society, and it is hoped that the publication of it may prove an excitement to others, and that the example may be generally followed in manufacturing houses.

“ Reformation in paper mills from the practice of excessive drinking has been very considerable. It will be necessary to know what this practice was, as well as what it now is, before we can ascertain the extent of the reformation.

“ It was formerly the custom for the employer to fur-

nish each journeyman in the mill, with a half pint of spirits at eleven o'clock, by way of *ration*. Of this the apprentices partook; and were thus initiated into the practice of *regular tasting*.

“ In addition to this there were a variety of occasions which furnished excuses for the introduction of spirits; such as the arrival and departure of a tramping journeyman....the commencement of work upon any new implements, and the well known practice termed *footing*, were all most scrupulously and faithfully observed by pouring out libations in honor of the bacchanalian deity. These privileges were guaranteed by a custom so forcibly, that no employer could attempt to controul them, without incurring the imputation of tyrant and usurper.

“ The *remnant stipend* of by far the greater part of the journeymen, and the perquisites of the apprentices, were uniformly put in requisition on Saturday afternoon, to enable the crew to *enjoy* the succeeding day: several of whom would become so *happy*, as to require a *taper-off* on Monday. It did not require a very long practice of this kind to excite an unquenchable thirst for strong drink, which could not be *allayed* with less than from a pint to a quart per day. It is almost unnecessary to add, that apprentices educated in such a school, would not fail to become as *journeymen*.

“ The above, with but little variation, would have answered for a picture of every paper mill in the United States, twenty years ago.

“ The practice of giving *rations* has been generally abolished in Pennsylvania for nearly that time. It was not, however, succeeded by any other effort, and its tendency was not felt as a general discouragement to the excessive use of strong drink.

“ About ten years since, the attention of several persons belonging to the trade was directed to this object ; but the attempt was by no means general, and, like most other beginnings in good works, met with so many discouragements, that every hope of success was nearly given up ; while noxious habits continued to increase in many places with unabated ardour, until the evil had become so great as scarcely to be endured.

“ At length a renewed effort was made ; and with the assistance of some persons connected with religious societies, who were employed as journeymen, in a few places, the principles of humanity have evidently gained a partial ascendancy over this instrument of universal corruption.

“ About this period, 1805, a number of persons interested in the paper manufacture, associated themselves together for the purpose of improving their art, and ameliorating the condition of *worthy* unfortunate journeymen and their families. The latter object naturally led to a consideration of the causes of misery and poverty among those people ; and it was soon discovered that objects of charity which had not become so by the excessive use of strong drink, were so rare, that this humane part of the institution would remain a dead letter, or be so seldom exercised that its usefulness could never be realized.

“ The fatal consequences of immoderate drinking were evident to all. And although it had hitherto been deprecated as an evil to be endured rather than submitted to, the absolute necessity for reformation was universally acknowledged, the moment its practicability was discovered. The benevolent disposition with which the association was formed, could not hesitate to lay hold of

so favourable an opportunity for effecting so great and essential a good both to the journeymen and employers. With one heart and one voice, all agreed to use every possible endeavour to *restrain* and *prohibit* the use of ardent spirits in their respective mills; not by formal resolves and arbitrary rules, which would only require to be known to be evaded; but by a constant and persevering endeavour to use such means as circumstances would permit, to resist and check the progress of this vice wherever it might prevail.

“The effect has been various, according to a variety of circumstances, under which the attempts have been made, but it has been fully ascertained through the bounds of their association, that *rum* is not essential to *life*, *health*, or even *conviviality*. The *rations* are not heard of. The *greeting* and the *valedictory* dram have been dispensed with. The implements will work without *wetting*, and the *footing* is even more solid without a foundation in *grog*.”

“The most powerful obstacle to the progress of this good work, is the contiguity of a certain description of stores and taverns, properly stiled DRAM SHOPS.

“The quantity of liquor drunk by those who have a propensity for it, will always bear some proportion to the facility of getting it. This fact is sufficiently proved by daily experience, and will refute that silly plea, by which retailers attempt to justify themselves, viz. ‘If a man wants liquor, he will have it, and if I don’t sell it to him another will!’ An argument that might as well be used to justify selling opium or arsenick to a lunatick.

“But returning from this digression, I will conclude by observing, that although much remains to be done, and in some instances, scarcely any thing has been done, yet it

may be boldly asserted that all-powerful Bacchus is now fast retreating from the paper mills of Pennsylvania, after an undisturbed possession of more than sixty years; and we look forward confidently to the time when he will be banished from all our manufacturing houses."

We shall here adduce some other facts relative to a reformation on the subject of spirituous liquors. At a large store of goods lately kept in a neighbouring state, a hogshead of spirits had often been retailed out in a day; and on those called holidays above double that quantity. But the owners, observing the mischievous consequences arising from the use of such vast quantities of intoxicating liquors, and considering themselves accessory thereto, determined to decline the practice of selling those liquors. Accordingly they have nobly sacrificed the means of obtaining a clear profit of several hundred dollars annually, with a view of promoting the real interest and happiness of mankind.

How truly philanthropic does this conduct appear, and especially when contrasted with that of licensing or keeping a tavern near to a place of public worship for the purpose of accommodating the congregation!! And yet it is a fact that such an instance as the latter has occurred in Pennsylvania, where the circumstances was fully explained to the court.

Since the yellow fever has so frequently visited Philadelphia, a considerable number of the citizens have declined the common use of spirituous liquors, and their drink is either beer, or Schuylkill water, rather than punch or grog. This direct change of custom is much promoted by the advice of Doctor Benjamin Rush, and the principal physicians of the place, as well as by the

concurring sentiments of the first characters of the faculty in other places.

The president of the United States, agreeable to an act of congress, does not admit that any kind of spirits should be sold to the Idians, in those trading houses that have been established for their use. Many of the Indians now living in the western parts of this state have voluntarily refrained from the use of spirits. At their settlements on the waters of the Allegany, they have erected a saw-mill, and have built handsome log houses. They keep cattle, raise grain, and live in a much better condition than formerly, when they drank freely of spirituous liquors.

Some of the tribes who reside farther to the westward, have entered into a national agreement not to permit any of the mad liquor to be sold in their country by the traders; and if any is discovered there by the sachems, they break the kegs with their tomahawks and let the contents flow on the ground.

Colonel Hawkins, to the southward, has also been very successful in his philanthropic labours, and has made great advances in introducing agriculture and the useful domestic arts among the natives; which certainly could not have been done, if they had not been first reclaimed from their usual habits of intemperance; and if the practice of temperance and sobriety is a necessary preliminary to the civilization of the native Indians, it is equally so among the white people.

It is not to be understood that all the Indians are about to be reformed at once; but rather that many valuable effects are resulting from their disuse of spirituous liquors, and acquiring habits of industry and mo-

rality; and that the various exertions of humanity for their real benefit, have thus been the means of meliorating their condition, and introducing them to the blessings of civilized life.

Thus it appears that the disuse of what the Indians so justly stile the mad liquor, is gradually advancing both among them and the white people exactly on the same principles; that is, by individuals acting at once agreeably to a present and eternal interest; and that in full contradiction to the calls of appetite, self-interest, popular opinion, and self-will, those grand supporters of every evil habit and custom, which usurp a despotism in ruling the manners of society on the bare authority of general prevalence.

“ Custom, that all mankind to slavery brings,
“ That dull excuse for doing silly things.”

SECTION III.

ARGUMENTS SHOWING THE NECESSITY OF A GENERAL REFORMATION, AND THE PROPRIETY OF WHOLLY ERADICATING THIS EVIL.

A great advantage would arise from adhering to correct and just principles, with a firmness proportionate to their importance; and by following the precepts and example of the best, and most enlightened part of mankind.

WITH respect to the use of spirituous liquors, it may be stated, as undeniable facts:

1. That drinking spirits in the heat of summer, tends to inflame the system: and though the animal spirits may be raised by a temporary excitement, yet the general strength or ability to labour, and bear the heat, is not increased, but lessened by it.

2. That it produces a sense of thirst, which is not diminished by drinking more, but is rather increased.

3. That the sense of weariness, on any degree of exertion, is greater afterwards, and sleep has not a natural and refreshing effect.

4. That although spirits may in some cases be properly employed in a medicinal way; yet those cases occur so seldom, and require such critical judgment to distinguish, as by no means to justify a common, and customary use.

5. It must be highly improper for persons otherwise in health, frequently to sip such efficient articles of a stimulating nature, as may be stiled powerful medicines, rather than suitable aliment to nourish the body, or re-

pair its strength ; and which must tend to introduce an occasion for their being continually repeated in augmented quantities, to produce the same effect.

6. The habit of using spirits is contagious, and is mostly acquired ; rather than originally occasioned by the cravings of a natural appetite.

These things being premised, let all the supposed advantages to be derived from the use of spirits, be candidly compared with the vast and real evils they certainly produce.

Let us consider that every degree of intemperance to which men arrive in the use of strong drink, does generally proceed, by the nature of habit, out of what is deemed the moderate use.

That the advances from the frequent use of spirits, under the idea of a casual necessity, or of their being helpful to the constitution, towards a continual use : and from that to a fatal intemperance, is almost certain : and that it is often the gradation of those who are employed to labour in hay-time and harvest, and in other business where spirits are commonly used ; and also that the progress of intemperance, often proceeds so slowly, as scarcely to be perceived in a short time.

That drunkenness tends towards a complete deprivation of every degree of religious sensibility and duty, and to destroy all the noble feelings and faculties of a rational being, rendering him wholly unfit to fulfil the important duties of domestic, social, and civil life.

That habits of intoxication greatly extend the degree and prevalence of vice and immorality, especially profaneness and vulgarity, not only at the present time, but, by the influence of example, to future generations.

Are not these effects of the custom of drinking spi-

rituous liquors, and the magnitude of the various evil consequences resulting therefrom, sufficient to excite the serious attention of every sober minded person to the merits of the subject, and to demand the employment of all his power and influence towards putting a stop to its prevalence.

But some may say, What can I do towards reforming the world? It may be answered, A great deal. The use of spirits is not supported by any direct authority, either civil, religious, or experimental; but rather by a number of individuals making, importing, vending, and using them by common consent. Now it is very clear that any one who wholly withdraws from any, and all of these practices, which he has been actively aiding to support, will, with respect to himself, have completed the whole business of reformation. He will then be in a capacity to persuade others to follow his example. Or, the powerful influence of his steady upright conduct, will induce them to consider the subject more attentively; and at length, they will join hands in so good a work; a work in which the welfare, the comfort and happiness of thousands, are concerned, and every man who heartily unites in its support, eventually contributes to advance the best interests of society, and to lessen the sum of human misery.

That a general and particular reformation, in regard to the use of spirituous liquors, is certainly necessary, no one can deny. It is therefore highly proper for each one to examine himself, and consider how far this pernicious custom is supported by the share he has in it, or in any of its relations: for it is only by a uniform and conscientious compliance of each individual with

his particular duty in the case, that such a reformation is to be expected.

But this desirable business cannot be effected, either by individuals, or collective authority, in any other manner, than by totally abstaining, not only from the customary use of distilled spirits, but from any concern, or traffic in them; and the object in view will appear to be fully worthy of such a sacrifice, when we duly consider that the use that is made of spirituous liquors, is one of the greatest evils prevailing in the United States; affecting, in various respects, a large portion of the people; operating directly against the welfare, peace and happiness of individuals and families; against the promotion of religion, learning, and good manners, and threatening to frustrate the happy enjoyment of a good government, and even its very existence.

The foregoing arguments may be grounded on these foundations:

1. That it is individual example and participation that make up, and continue the general prevalence.
2. That great numbers of unhappy men of valuable talents and amiable dispositions, by yielding too easy a compliance with custom, and through the bewitching influence of habit, become lost to themselves, to their families, and to society.
3. That every succeeding generation is introduced into the deplorable evil by the force of example; of which the frequency tends to lessen the abhorrence of its guilt.
4. That the degrees evidently tend towards the extreme, and the mass of depravity and corruption in the minds and manners of the people is greatly increased.

And, therefore, that religion, reason, and experience

unitedly call for, and would undoubtedly justify a speedy reformation, and a total abstaining from the customary and common use of distilled spirituous liquors : and especially inasmuch as sufficient experience has fully proved that they are not really useful ; but on the contrary that they are the original root of drunkenness, and have a very intimate connexion with it, in producing so many evil consequences.

The important duty of promoting a reformation rests principally upon the collective bodies of religious societies ; upon persons whose precepts and example may be the most impressive, such as ministers of the gospel of every denomination, influential members of religious societies in their several stations, civil magistrates, and persons employed in government ; teachers of public schools, and in every neighbourhood persons of influence among the people.

The female sex of every class and degree, might be prevailing instruments of doing much good, by kind and affectionate persuasion against the dangerous and insinuating evil. And then, if they should ever become unhappy sufferers through its destructive effects, in their own families, or among their connexions, they would not have to blame themselves for having given too easy a countenance to its introduction.

SECTION IV.

PARTICULAR CLASSES OF MEN INSTRUMENTAL IN PROMOTING THE
DESTRUCTIVE USE OF SPIRITS....CONSEQUENCES ARISING THERE-
FROM.

WHERE cunning people pass counterfeits, and impose that on others which is good for nothing, it is considered as a wickedness; but for the sake of gain, to sell that to people, which we know does them harm, and which often works their ruin; or in any way to promote such doings, manifests a hardened, and corrupt heart, and is an evil which demands the care of all true lovers of virtue to suppress....*Woolman.*

THERE are particular persons, who are specially concerned in relation to the use that is made of spirituous liquors, whose responsibility must be in proportion to their respective degree of agency and influence in the subject.

Those who are in the practice of making or retailing spirits, have a great share of responsibility. It is through them that the great monster of intemperance receives a continual supply in all its degrees of growth; and they cannot be ignorant of it. Some may be more to blame than others; but those who continually sell spirits to persons who they know are advancing to ruin by the use of them, are certainly culpable for being active in the cause; as they are in a strict sense accessory to the consequence. Many excuses are advanced to evade the guiltiness of such practices; but they are all alike futile and inconsistent, unless self-interest be admitted as the fundamental principle of conduct. If

profit be the only temptation, such a deliberate pursuit of gain in contravention of so plain a point of duty, must be a more reprehensible evil than the gratification of a natural appetite, that had gained ground by habit; notwithstanding the self-interested customs and maxims of a depraved world may not favour such an opinion.

The comparative estimate of difference between a person habituated to excess, and one who sells him the drink either in a tavern or a store for the sake of gaining a few cents, may be fairly explained in this way: The first is always an object of pity, and frequently of compassion, and may be otherwise a person of correct principles and conduct; but the latter cannot lay claim to such a generous sympathy, or degree of character in the particular case; having no motive but *avarice* alone, to induce him in promoting the deplorable misery and debasement of a fellow creature, and perhaps of a poor suffering wife and children, who depend upon his earning for their support. But if we believe, that man is immortal and accountable for his actions; then the criminality of drunkenness, and also of uniting in promoting it, must at once appear in a higher point of view, and with a degree of importance far beyond the destructive effects of a *temporary* evil.

It might be readily proved by such evidence as the subject is capable of, that the countenance afforded to support the customary use of spirits, by the sentiments and example of persons of substantial characters and temperate habits, has had a more extensive and impressive effect to promote intoxication, than all the unguardedness of the vulgar, and the sensuality of sots united together.

If persons in authority were to unite in executing the

laws, agreeably to their plain intention, and the importance of their object, especially in granting tavern licences, and effectually punishing transgressors, so as to raise the standard of legal morality into public view : and if persons of temperate habits and respectable characters, who are in the practice of using spirits in the customary way, could be prevailed upon to reduce the employment of those pernicious and dangerous articles to their proper degree of restriction, it is not a vain estimate to presume, that such a rational and exemplary reformation in the first ranks of society, aided by a proper education of the youth, would, by degrees, discourage and prevent a great proportion of the intemperance, and its consequences, that now prevail in the world.

It has been justly observed by a late writer, that, "The multiplication of inns, taverns, and dram shops, is an obvious national evil, which calls loudly for legislative interference ; for in no country are they more numerous, or more universally baneful."*

The great number of public houses, and their inferior condition, inadequate for the purpose intended, have long been subjects of serious complaint in the interior parts of Pennsylvania ; and they appear to be still increasing. Licences are granted to keep public houses, where, either from their local situation or nearness to each other, they are not necessary for the entertainment of travellers, or the accommodation of persons employed on business. They are frequently granted to persons of bad principles and disorderly conduct, who from a kind of necessity are in the practice of speculating by the vices and follies of mankind : and hence as a natural

* Davis's Geography.

consequence, such taverns become perfect nuisances in the neighbourhoods where they are situated, being generally places of resort of idleness, poverty, and dissipation, and influential schools of vice and immorality.

The law of this state which assumes public houses keeping under legal restraint and regulation, bears a plain evidence, that it was not intended merely for the purpose of raising a revenue; but rather to be a guard to preserve the morals of the people, as is so clearly expressed in the preamble to the act against vice and immorality. And for the greater security, the whole power is vested in the hands of persons in the respective counties, who are likely to be of the first rank of society, and by the tenor of their appointment, they are rendered completely independent of every kind of undue bias and influence. But the root of evil strikes deep, and is nourished by too much respecting the spirit and practice of the *world as it is*; rather than regulating the sentiments and conduct agreeably to the letter and spirit of the law, and to the fundamental principles of right and wrong as they really are: and hence our country is disgraced by a number of licenced tippling houses, and our penal laws are become almost a dead letter.

It is certain that *vicious habits* promote *bad principles*; and these will have a continual and reciprocal effect upon each other: and this will be the case while ever evil customs, erroneous opinions, complaisant self interest, and habits of intemperance, prevailing among a certain proportion of the people, unite in forming the current criterion of what is right and wrong on the subjects under consideration; a criterion far below the standard of real truth and right reason. This is evidently the

case with respect to the practice of distilling spirits from grain, which appears balancing between principle and self interest in the minds of the people; and if it were not for the natural and blinding influence of the latter, the former would certainly prevail. Iron, sulphur, and nitre, are originals in the composition of the universe, and of primary use and importance. But if men assume the liberty of employing them, for the purpose of cruelly wounding and killing one another, it can be no marvel, if they should also convert grain, which is the material of bread, into ardent spirits. Now it is well known that these in their effects promote and increase the miseries of human life, and in numerous instances, actually shorten the period of its existence. Grain is evidently adapted to the purpose of nourishing and supporting the great family of mankind, and is the most valuable natural blessing that they are favoured with by a benevolent Providence; and there never was a surplus of it, or more than was necessary for the nourishment of animal life in the natural and substantial manner of using it; and therefore to distil spirits from grain, or any way to participate in the business, is an unwarrantable exercise of that free agency in which men may so easily transgress, when the lucre of gain offers the temptation.

A financier of state, or a distiller of grain, with a cold indifference, may calculate upon the amount of revenue arising from the importation of spirits, or the actual saving to the country by their domestic production; but this in the present state of things would be a kind of deceptive arithmetic, if the consequent loss sustained in the morals and virtues of the people was not placed on the opposite page to balance the account.

When we take a review of the whole subject intended to be elucidated by the foregoing observations, what melancholy reflections must fill the feeling mind, to see the frailty of human nature on the one hand, and the mischievous influence of avarice on the other. The whole portraiture is not mere idle declamation, or fanciful amusement; but relates to a subject of first rate importance, in which the welfare of individuals, and also of society in general, is concerned. It relates to no less than the destruction of the bodies and souls of men....to derangement and discord in families. Innocent wives variously afflicted, and helpless children sorrowfully abused and neglected in various respects, but especially in the material point of their religious education; and the family often sinking into abject poverty and a final dependance upon private or public charity for support. Or if the means of living remain, it is obvious that such a life, without hope of amendment, is not worth enjoying.

It is too general that these kind of serious evils prevail more or less in almost every neighbourhood, as the effects of intemperance; especially where taverns, stores, or distilleries abound, kept by persons who rule their conduct by these erroneous or misapplied principles, viz. That every person has a right to do as he pleases with his own; that they keep spirits to sell as a common article of trade; and that it is not the concern of the seller what use is made of them by the purchasers, who, being free agents, are alone responsible for their own intemperance; that such persons will get strong drink somewhere, and they may as well supply them as another.... That every thing is good in its place, and that spirituous liquors are good when properly used. It is with this

kind of deleterious reasoning, that self interest endeavours to defend itself. But, one single instance of the practical consequences of selling spirits to an unhappy person, who renders his life miserable, and shortens the period of its existence by intemperance, contains sufficient evidence to refute it all; and if all the effects that had arisen from the use of a single hogshead of spirits, could be brought to pass in review, the spectacle would be sufficient to settle the point of right and wrong on the subject.

There can scarcely be a more deplorable object of human misery than a drunken sot, who has arrived at such a state of intemperance that it appears as if he must drink spirits to keep himself alive; and yet it is also certain, that he must die a miserable death by continuing the practice. This is often the case towards the latter end of the tragedy. But the first beginning, and every succeeding step in such a gradation, must also be dreadful, as it is evidently travelling on a road that leads to such a period. But there are very few retailers of spirits, of any description, who are not supplying those who are in some point or other, in this progressive scale. And those who use spirits to excess appear infatuated; scarcely one in a hundred wholly abstains, although such abstinence is the only experiment that will afford perfect security.

“ If not so frequent, would not this be strange,

“ That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.”

A tender mother may deplore the state of an intemperate son, an afflicted wife may lament for the partner of her life, and the unhappy father of her children, an innocent daughter may feel for the dissipation of a parent, and for the sufferings of a neglected family; but in

vain are the tears of sympathy and distress, as there are such slender hopes of success in the deplorable case, while an avaricious spirit, prevailing in many of those who keep spirits to sell, induces them to supply their customers with the means of self destruction, even on credit, while ever the prospect of payment remains; and while the fear of giving offence, to the detriment of their own interest, supercedes every duty of a humane or a religious nature.

SECTION V.

PARTICULAR ADDRESS TO YOUTH, ON THE SUBJECT OF WHOLLY
DECLINING THE CUSTOMARY USE OF SPIRITS.

May you so raise your characters, that you may help to make the next age a better thing, and leave posterity in your debt for the advantages it shall receive by your care and example.....*Lord Halifax*

THE foregoing description of the evils resulting from a free use of spirits, has been extended and varied, in order to give a full picture of its real depravity, and to strike the mind with forcible conviction. But little hope need be entertained of convincing, or at least of converting, those who are grown old in custom, or hardened in principle, or those who have an interest or habitual inclination to continue in their former practice.

It may therefore be proper, finally to close this short essay, with a serious address to the hopeful rising youth of our country, and especially to those of generous dispositions, who are favoured with a good degree of a liberal education; and hence are likely, in the progress of a few years, to become ranked in the most substantial and respectable class of society, and therefore, will be the more responsible for the example set by their conduct.

Purity of principle, correctness of sentiment, and generosity of disposition, are valuable traits of the human character, tending to promote the interest and happiness

of individuals, and the benefit of society in general; and therefore, are worthy to be cultivated in the youthful mind: But depravity of principle, inconsistency of sentiment, and selfishness of disposition, produce degeneracy in practice, and depreciate the true dignity of human nature.

The general consequences arising from the customary use of spirits, is highly deserving your serious attention. Some of its various evils have been remarked: But the practice of using spirits in hay time and harvest, and at carrying on buildings, occasions a vast consumption of them; in which, as far as you may become active agents, you will be responsible for the effects of the general habit of drinking to excess, which is much promoted by it. And be assured that the difficulty of breaking the custom of giving spirits to labourers, would not be so great, as is commonly supposed, if the employers themselves, and their families, were wholly to abstain from the unnecessary use of them at all times, and on all occasions; which will be the best and only method of doing the business effectually. And, therefore, if it may be so readily done, let the experiment be fairly tried; you will thereby feel yourselves released from a *bondage*, not only with respect to the enslaving custom itself, but also be placed in an impartial condition, capable of judging correctly on the merits of the subject. And although the number who wholly decline the use of spirits, may be but few, compared with those who are in the practice, yet the principles of their testimony, in the case, are respectable, and the certain evidence of their being right, will always appear every where from the subject itself. For it is surely a righteous testimony, which has begun with a few, and is advancing by degrees, and would greatly

spread and prevail, if those who are in the first and middle ranks of society would but unite in earnest, each one in regulating himself, and in promoting a reformation in others. But perhaps the question may be asked, why sober people ought to deprive themselves of the use of spirits, because others use them immoderately? But if no manner of benefit arises from the common use of spirits, especially in hay-time and harvest, when the greatest quantity is consumed; but rather a great damage at all times, and in various respects; then the whole argument implied in the query is lost at once, and needs no further reply. But even if a benefit were admitted in the use, yet it is certain that thousands of all classes, by degrees have become drunkards, who must have been preserved, if they had never commenced the practice of taking *a little*; and who doubtless began with every flattering assurance of moderation and temperance; and there are multitudes who are much hurt by the free use of spirits, who never became fairly intoxicated. Idleness, dissipation, and vice, are much promoted by the levity and indiscrimination of principle and conduct connected with it, as is evidently shown by the example of neighbourhoods where it most generally prevails, and it operates as a deadly poison, destroying every thing that is good and valuable in religious, civil, and social society.

When the father of a family is lying on his death bed, it must be an afflicting circumstance if any of his offspring, whom he is about to leave behind him, should be in the practice of using strong drink to excess. But his reflection on the sorrowful subject must be more painful, if in those serious moments he should find that he had not done all in his power to prevent it: which could not be the case, if he had introduced in his family the use

of spirits, and set the example by using them himself; employing frivolous reasons to defend it; or more especially if he had been instrumental in directly supplying those who he knew were intemperate. Perhaps in such a trying moment it will be plainly seen, that there is no real security but in *perfect sobriety*, and in a religious principle that governs it; and that those cannot be clear of the general evil of intemperance, who are actively aiding in promoting the means of its prevalence. But if the great idol *self* be made the first principle and leading motive of action and sentiment, it is sufficient to poison every thing that is either great, generous, or valuable in the human heart, by means of a refined and fashionable policy, which greatly forms the characteristic manners of the present age; and while ever men confine their views and energies within the narrow and dark circle of selfishness, they feel but little concern for the general benefit of mankind, or sense of duty resulting from it; and consequently are more inclined to unite in the customary use of spirituous liquors, or to make a gainful traffic of them, than to adopt any such effectual measures to prevent it, that may affect either their pecuniary interest, present convenience, or general popularity.

This is a remarkable age for valuable improvements, in which the young and rising generation are greatly interested. But no subject requires their close attention more than that of forming such sentiments and opinions, to be regarded as general rules of conduct in life, as directly result from the plain fundamental principles of the Christian Religion, and consequently acting agreeably thereto, without yielding an improper compliance with the corrupt maxims and customs of the depraved

part of the world we live in. The practice of using ardent spirits in a customary way, is far from being indifferent or unimpressive, as it certainly produces a great variety of deplorable and destructive consequences, without being counterbalanced or paliated by any certain and real benefit resulting from it. On this summary view of the subject, if those who are now advancing on the stage of active life, would endeavour to promote such a degree of reformation as the present depraved state of morals in society, and the misfortune of individuals require, there can be no doubt but that every proper exertion, and every sacrifice they might make, would redound to their own benefit and ultimate satisfaction; and although the effects might be slow in their progression, yet as the important interests of mankind, both temporal and eternal, would be advanced by it, the experiment must be highly worthy of being made by every friend of mankind.

The young and rising generation of this highly favoured land of America, have the choice freely to make for themselves, whether they will implicitly follow a hurtful custom, that has destroyed so many thousands of their fellow creatures, and may lead many of them to ruin; or rather determine to act with a firmness of resolution, suitable to the importance of the occasion, and in a manner becoming the dignity of men, and the character of Christians.

