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# ADDRESS

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY

FOR THE

### Suppression of Intemperance,

MAY 29, 1828.

BY JOSHUA B. FLINT, M. D.

PRINTED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

BOSTON,

BOWLES & DEARBORN, 72, WASHINGTON STREET.

1828.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit:*

*District Clerk's Office.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the seventh day of June A. D. 1828, in the fiftysecond year of the Independence of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, *Bowles and Dearborn*, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, *to wit:*

“An Address delivered before the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, May 29, 1828. By JOSHUA B. FLINT, M. D. Printed by request of the Society.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an act entitled “An act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.”

JNO. W. DAVIS, } *Clerk of the District of  
Massachusetts.*

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BOSTON,

Press of Isaac R. Butts and Co.

## ADDRESS.

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THE immoderate use of intoxicating substances, seems to have been a vice almost coeval and coextensive with the human race. The scriptures inform us that it existed soon after the flood, and it has ever since continued to prevail in different degrees, in every part of the world—a lamentable example of the proneness of mankind, to covet pleasurable sensations to excess, to give appetite the ascendancy over reason, and to suffer the body to become the instrument of destruction to the soul.

Nations of savages, we are told, have been discovered so ignorant and stupid as to be unacquainted with the use of fire, which implies but a single step beyond the habits and condition of brutes; but no nation has yet been found, that had not invented some process, by which they obtain the means of producing that artificial excitement which precedes and ends in ebriety.

For a long period in the early history of our

race, the intoxicating liquors and drugs now in use, were not known, or were but little used. Soon after the discovery of the inebriating qualities of the grape, this gift of God, bestowed to sustain and cheer, not to prostrate and consume him who was placed on the earth to cultivate it, appears to have been abused by the intemperate, for many ages, as the only known means of intoxication. In after times, certain plants were found to contain inebriating qualities, and were perverted, like the fruit of the vine, from their salutary uses as cordials and remedies for the infirm and diseased, so as to become the bane of health, strength and comfort.

Not content with these less powerful, and more tardy means of producing the delirium of intoxication, men of a still later age have contrived to extract from various substantial fruits of the earth which nature supplies as the staff of life, an essence of quicker and surer efficacy—and it may with truth be said, that among all the inventions which have been sought out by man, whereby the uprightness of mind in which he was created, has been lost, and the primitive purity of his soul polluted, not one has wrought with such pernicious and prevalent effect, as the distillation of ardent spirits.

Wherever these poisonous liquors abound, there intemperance appears in the most alarming frequency, assumes its most loathsome forms, and achieves its most lamentable triumphs.

I do not fear to be accused of exaggeration by any who are conversant with the moral condition of this country, when I say, that the excessive use of ardent spirits is the most pernicious and extensive of all the vices whose sad consequences give occasion to most of the benevolent exertions of individuals and associations among us. From the single mendicant, whose trembling hand is stretched out for your passing alms, to the multitude of ruined and wretched beings, who crowd the houses of public charity, we may, almost without exception, trace all the sad variety of suffering which we are called on to relieve, to this one great and disgraceful cause.

So notorious, indeed, are the existence and calamitous consequences of this evil, that I should not feel authorized in dwelling on these points at all, were it not for the consideration, that the first step towards any well-directed efforts to check the progress of mischief, is to know and feel deeply its nature and extent; and that the very frequency with which we are compelled to witness this vice, is calculated to weaken our impressions of its malignity, and leave us indifferent to its pernicious power. Its frequency—for, with an effrontery peculiar to itself, in some one of its forms, its stages, or its consequences, it obtrudes itself on our notice, and abuses our sympathy, at every turn.

You may perceive its first withering attack, in the forsaken friendships, the slackening industry, and the altered countenance of its victim. You may trace its desolating progress in his fallen fame,

his ruined fortune, his disgusting deformity and imbecility; and the disastrous catastrophe of its reign is written in letters of ignominy, which swell the catalogue of self-created pauperism; or in letters of blood, on the records of public justice.

But, however severe and accumulated the sufferings of the transgressor himself, they constitute but a small part of the legitimate penalty of his perverse indulgence. Every individual is so connected with others, either in one or both directions in the course of his existence, that they cannot but participate, more or less, in the good or ill which awaits him. Perhaps he has parents, whose anxious lives had been devoted to his welfare, and who were comforting themselves in the prospect of his usefulness and respectability, with those hopes which are so near and dear to the parental heart. But he has yielded to the suggestions of an insidious appetite, and is lost. Untoward circumstances, or a propensity which might easily have been controlled at first, have led him on to excess, and he is become a drunkard. His heart is no longer alive to the sacred obligations of a child, and he has mingled bitterness in that cup, from which his parents had expected to have drawn the sustenance and solace of their declining years.

On the other hand, he may have assumed relations and obligations of a still tenderer nature, in becoming a husband and father. But how does he fulfil the duties which they impose? In the distracting vortex of dissipation into which intemper-

ance, and its attendant vices have hurried him, he seldom thinks of home, or of the objects which ought to endear it to him. The quiet scenes of domestic duty and purity have lost their charm, and he prefers the boisterous revelry, the impure and profane jests, and the vulgar and licentious conversation of the club room, or the dram shop. Meantime, his deserted wife is left to grieve over her blighted prospects of happiness in his absence, and, on his return, to be the sport of his irritable temper, or the victim of brutal violence, from the cruelty of inflamed and unrestrained passion.

How completely has he disqualified himself also for the discharge of all parental duty. Himself the squanderer of his patrimony and former acquisitions, devoting the proceeds of the little industry, which his vicious expenditures compel him to observe, to gratify the insatiable demands of his growing appetite—how can he provide food, and raiment, and shelter, and fuel, for his neglected family? Himself, literally dead in trespasses and sins, can he do anything, or would he, if he could do anything, towards inculcating in them a respect for the obligations of religion or virtue, a regard for truth, honesty, honor, purity? Certainly not. Alas! then, for those children, if in their other parent, they have not a better one. The lessons of virtue and temperance, taught by the tender eloquence of maternal lips, and enforced by the sad contemplation of maternal wrongs, may save them from the corrupting influence of their father's example, and they may live to

bless and reward the saving care of their mother ; while they must weep over the memory of their father's life, and blush at the mention of his name.

But the picture of distress and infamy presented by a single instance of this vice, however deeply coloured by the ruin of domestic hopes and happiness, which it involves, can, of course, give no adequate conception of the actual amount of individual and social unhappiness which it occasions in the community.

The extent of the evil, I apprehend, is much less generally understood, than its extremity in any particular case where it occurs. It has been ascertained by more than one method of calculation, proceeding on the most unquestionable data, that we have, in our nation, not less than three hundred thousand confirmed drunkards, in different stages of the vice. Considering the connexion which subsists between the different members of society, either by the ties of interest, friendship, or consanguinity, it is not unreasonable to assume, with an excellent writer\* on this subject, that "for every three habitually intemperate persons, there are as many as seven others whose happiness is in some way seriously affected by the vice of these three." If it be so, and there be now living in this country three hundred thousand persons devoted to this habit, then the unhappiness arising from it extends itself directly to a million of persons—one twelfth part of the population of the country. Yes, in this land, which boasts of a more

\* Rev. Mr Palfrey.

universal diffusion of intelligence, virtue, purity and happiness, than any other on the earth, one twelfth part of the inhabitants are doomed to suffer disease, poverty, infamy, or mortification, as the bitter fruit of this prolific and deep-rooted evil.

A few years ago, it was calculated from authentic returns made by responsible persons, situated in many different places, that intemperance was the immediate or remote cause of the death of three persons annually in every thousand. According to which it appears, that in the State of Massachusetts, eighteen hundred, and in the United States, thirty-six thousand lives are annually destroyed by this self-administered poison.

We shudder, at the thought of that dreadful idolatry, whose barbarous rites were celebrated by the recreant Jews, in the valley of Hinnom, and our hearts bleed over the affecting narratives we receive of the voluntary human sacrifices, which make a part of the religious observances of heathen people in our own time, while the fact passes almost unnoticed by us, that in this country, of which it has been said by an eminent jurist, that suicide may not be enumerated among its vices, a number of citizens is annually self-immolated on the altar of intemperance, compared with which, the victims of Moloch, and of Hindoo superstition dwindle into insignificance.

In adverting to the causes of the evil, I have attempted to describe, it will be convenient to divide them, into those which are remote, and those which are immediate. A brief consideration of both classes

will guide us to a more judicious choice and application of the means to be used for opposing or destroying their influence.

The remote causes of intemperance are to be found in a system of maxims and practices, very extensively entertained in society, by which the habitual use of spirituous liquors, in moderate quantities, is countenanced and recommended as safe and salutary.

I need not, if I could, particularize the various absurd usages which have sprung up under the influence of these mistaken views of the nature of ardent spirits, and of their effects on the human constitution. They are but too well known to us all. We have been educated in the midst of them from our infancy—we see them observed, without reproach, by those whose age and station make them arbiters of the customs of society, and the mass of the people with whom we constantly mingle, regard them as harmless, at least, if not essential to the comfort and etiquette of life. Thus sanctioned by the authority of the great, and the fashion of the multitude, little inquiry has been made respecting their intrinsic propriety, and still less resistance attempted of their mischievous requisitions.

It is thought, for example, that laboring men imbibe strength and vigor with their drams, and, therefore, they are served out to them at stated times, as an indispensable part of their provisions. How absurd!

Corporeal strength and energy are derived only

from substantial and nutritious food. The most harmless drinks are of no other use in the economy, than to soften and dilute the solid alimentary matter. These subtle intoxicating liquors contain no principle which can be converted into chyle, which is the product of the digestion of wholesome food; and which, being circulated through every part of the body, conveys to it the material of its life, strength, and activity. The very art by which they are manufactured, consists essentially, in separating them from the healthful sustenance, with which they are united in the substances used in their preparation.

The prodigious destruction of wholesome food, in the various fruits and grains employed in distillation, in this country, exhibits, in a striking view, the wasteful and spendthrift character of those indulgences, which have gained such footing in society. It has been computed, that a quantity of nourishing food, equivalent to twentyfive or thirty millions of bushels of grain, is thus annually consumed. More than one half of the staple products of four or five of our Middle and Western States, which are fertile as the garden of Eden, is wasted, or worse than wasted, in preparing the various kinds of intoxicating liquors,—while a single ship might have borne to our perishing fellow-christians in Greece, all the bread stuffs, which the awakened sympathy and active charity of those States, could collect for them there.

Take another occasion. A man is exposed to extreme heat or cold, or dampness. He is taught

that there is a potent charm in the cup which will render him proof against the noxious influences of all such agents. Of course, in proportion to the number and magnitude of his perils will be the depth and frequency of his potations. Delusive advice! Fatal practice! Who are in fact the victims of these dreaded extremes of temperature? Gather the testimony of every respectable man, experienced in the diseases of tropical countries, and you will find but one opinion on the point we are considering. The intemperate, and the moderate drinkers, are the subjects of the terrible diseases which ravage those climes; and ability to labor, as well as exemption from disease are to be secured there, only by the most rigid abstinence from strong drinks.

So also, of the sudden deaths which occasionally happen among us from exposure to excessive heat,—can you point me to a single example of this accident where the subject of it had not previously exhausted the powers of life by the habitual, though perhaps moderate, use of artificial stimuli.

The same is true also at the other extreme of temperature. Inquire of those adventurous voyagers who have pushed their way farthest into the regions of perpetual night and winter, and have remained there longest. Were their crews crippled or frozen when the liquor casks were drained? Not at all. They still braved the rigors of the climate, performed their usual labor, practised their customary sports, and enjoyed the same degree of health

and comfort, as before their boasted panacea was exhausted.

The habits and condition of some of the miners in South America, of whom a recent traveller has furnished such interesting accounts, speaks volumes in refutation of the popular error I am controverting. There, if anywhere, it might be supposed that some artificial stimulus would be necessary. Pursuing an unvaried round of the most toilsome labor—passing the greater portion of their lives in the bosom of the earth, in the midst of cold, dampness and impure air, they nevertheless prolong a cheerful and healthy existence beyond the average period of human life, in happy inexperience of the assumed strengthening and protecting power of ardent spirits.

These are notorious and unquestionable facts, and it is owing to a culpable disregard of them and similar ones, on the part of those to whom it belongs to inform and fashion public opinion, on such subjects, that the laboring classes of people in particular, are suffering from the influence of unfounded prejudices in favor of the utility of ardent spirits—of which prejudices, these facts and analogous ones, if properly observed and represented, would in a great measure disabuse them.

But, when we have said that these favorite drinks are *never necessary* to healthy men, the whole truth on the subject is by no means told. It is equally certain, that except in some rare cases of excessive prostration consequent on serious disease, they are

*always positively hurtful.* I would not, for the purpose of the present argument, make use of exaggerated representations either of matters of opinion, or matters of fact, nor indulge in hypothetical statements which the common experience of mankind will contradict; for by such means I could neither expect to obtain credit for myself, nor favor for the cause which I am here as elsewhere humbly endeavoring to serve; but I speak advisedly both of doctrine and fact, when I say, that no person can persist in the daily use of a single glass of spirituous liquor without inflicting some injury on his health or constitution. It will be greater or less, according to the temperament of the individual. It may be so inconsiderable that it is not from day to day perceived by himself or noticed by others. But although it be doing its mischievous work in the secret recesses of the system, beyond the cognisance of the senses, and disturbing the delicate balance of those mysterious powers and processes of organization, which have eluded all the investigations of physiology, still the injury is not the less real, and the accumulated repetitions of it will, sooner or later, become manifest, in symptoms which cannot be mistaken, and probably will never be removed. From what we know of the economy of animal life, and of the properties of spirituous liquors, it is certain that these last are,—without a metaphor,—poisons, slow indeed, but sure; and that man, who relying on occasional examples of longevity among acknowledged drunkards, or on his own seeming present im-

munity, thinks to indulge himself in an habitual though sparing use of them without harm, trifles with his health, and foolishly jeopardizes his life.

It is well known as a matter of constant experience to physicians, if not generally understood, that even the most moderate use of the substances in question, predisposes the body to become the victim of many diseases which would have assailed it in vain, if its powers of resistance had not been exhausted by the continual application of unnecessary stimulants—that many diseases assume, in such persons, a malignant and alarming character, which in others would be mild and manageable, and that the system is thereby rendered insusceptible to the kindly operation of some of our most valuable medicinal agents.

I have hitherto spoken only of distilled liquors; and it may be said that in recommending entire abstinence from them only, we should deprive the poor of their only attainable luxury, while the rich might revel in the unreproved use of more costly means of excitement, which contain, though in a smaller proportion, the same noxious principle as the products of distillation. But the *fact* is, that vinous and malt liquors are not by any means, among us, so mischievous agents as ardent spirits, and therefore the use of them cannot with justice be so severely reprov'd. Moreover, it is notorious that in those countries where wine is so cheap as to be the common drink of the people, drunkenness is a very rare vice. It has therefore been a favorite

plan of many active and judicious persons, taking it for granted that men will drink something in the form of cordial or stimulating liquors, to introduce these lighter drinks as substitutes for those more dangerous liquors which are, at present, the most common means of intoxication.

In devising measures to act successfully on mankind, we must indeed view them as they are, and not as we would have them, and therefore there may be much wisdom in the proposed plan. But, whatever indulgence of long cherished prejudices, it may be thought expedient to provide for at present, it should never be forgotten, that the only sound and consistent *doctrine* on this subject is, that *water* is the only natural, necessary and healthful drink for man. This precious beverage, which is poured out so profusely from the bosom of our mother earth, for the refreshment of her children, like other common and constant blessings of creation, is too lightly valued, and in a thousand instances, is held by the perverted imagination of man, in the most sovereign contempt.

There are many popular books on diatetics which have contributed to strengthen and perpetuate this error, by their encomiums on generous wines as an habitual drink. I have lately met with one which is entitled "The art of living long and comfortably," and which purports to come to us under the sanction of medical authority, in which it is taught, with as little credit to the writer's philosophy as his philanthropy, that "about a pint of wine

in the twentyfour hours, is sufficient for a healthy man of ordinary stature, and not following any laborious employment.”

Now this is nonsense and falsehood of the most gross and dangerous kind to be disseminated in the community. There is not a plant or a beast on the face of the earth, in which all the functions necessary to a healthy existence are not carried on without the interposition of any other stimulus than that derived from the plain food and drinks which nature provides, and is it supposable that man alone, by a lamentable deficiency in his physical organization, was driven to seek out this invention, to preserve him in health and vigor, which has contributed more than anything else, to the weakness and depravity of his whole nature.

But a great part of the unnecessary drinking among us, takes place without any consideration of its effects on the health, or its other consequences, but merely in conformity to custom or at the suggestion of a depraved appetite. Indeed, I believe, notwithstanding the many pretences to the contrary, that this last named particular must be set down as the principal reason why spiritous liquors are used at all.

Men are not content with the ordinary flow of healthful and temperate sensations, and with those operations of the system which are equal and regular. They grow tired of this natural and salubrious tranquillity. Something more brisk—something that gives them a stronger sense of existence

must be felt—something that imparts a preternatural energy and elevation, and gives life a more poignant relish than is found in the ordinary current of natural sensations, or in those temperate gratifications of appetite which a healthy system derives from plain food and unfermented drinks.

Unhappily, the moral sentiment of the community which, at present, stigmatizes the open indulgence of other sensual lusts, sanctions the gratification of this, and even tempts to it by encouraging a thousand seductive practices.

We are invited to it by the voice of friendship, which proffers the intoxicating cup as the first pledge of its sincerity. We are urged to it by the well intended importunities of hospitality, which must needs welcome the coming and speed the going guest, with some exhilarating draught which can equally heighten the joy of meeting, and soften the regrets of separation. The rites of conviviality cannot be celebrated without it, and the plainer table which is every day surrounded, for the more sober satisfactions of the family repast, is, in many places, never spread without them.

Now all these various occasions of moderate drinking, are so many remote but efficient causes of intemperance. Whoever allows himself in the habitual observance of them, is thereby predisposed, sooner or later, to become a decided inebriate. He has, in this way, cultivated a relish for them. He has occasionally experienced the enchantment of a

transient exhilaration, and has felt the bewitching power of intoxicating liquor to elevate the spirits when depressed, to throw a charm over scenes and things which are otherwise intolerably dull and uninteresting. Once initiated into the beguiling pleasures of this unnatural state of being, and intemperance forthwith becomes his besetting sin.

However moderate the draught which is sufficient at first to produce the desired excitement, every repeated indulgence makes an increased quantity requisite to produce an equal effect. This is a law of the system respecting the use of all such substances—and there is another related to it which is not less positive and universal—that every unnatural excitement is followed by a corresponding depression and uneasiness.

By the combined but unsuspected operation of these principles, the cup which was at first carelessly sipped, as a matter of courtesy, or in conformity with custom, is soon quaffed with the eager relish of importunate appetite, and the harmless exhilaration which occasionally surprised a man in the unguarded moment of social glee, has been repeated and prolonged, into a habit which hurries its victim onward to ruin, with an infatuation and certainty which has no parallel among the weaknesses or vices of human nature. His intervals of sober consciousness gradually become shorter and more intolerable, and the alternate excitement is carried higher and higher, until, by and by, nothing will suffice short of that wild delirium in which the ha-

bitual inebriate finds, at length, the only happiness of which he is capable.

Then comes the misery of the hours that succeed, the wretchedness that must be endured as the immediate penalty of this unnatural revel and intemperate joy. The powers of nature which have been raised during the process of inebriation, to such a triumphant elevation above embarrassment, and trouble, and poverty, and shame, sink down suddenly and ebb to the lowest depths of depression and gloom. The draught which he has swallowed, as if drawn from the fountain of life, has turned to bitterness and poison. The paradise into which he seemed to have found his way, has vanished, and he is left to count over the long list of evils he has incurred—a list, like the roll spread before the prophet, “written within and without with lamentations and mourning and wo.”

This is intemperance. We pity its victim; we deprecate the vice; but we are not wont to trace it back as we should do, to those warranted practices of unnecessary drinking, in which it so often originates, and which I have represented as the most efficient among the remote causes of the vice.

It is, indeed, their natural and constant *tendency* to produce it, although this tendency is happily counteracted in the greater number of cases, by more salutary influences, and in this way the reality of it escapes our notice.

We are reminded, that almost everybody has indulged in the use of intoxicating liquors to a greater

or less extent,—that the majority of the community nevertheless, is in good repute for temperance and sobriety, and that it is only the weak and unprincipled, who abuse these harmless gratifications, to their own ruin, and the disgrace of their species. In particular, we have known many individuals, of distinguished usefulness and excellence, who drink them daily, without harm or reproach,—and, finally, we have used them habitually ourselves, in moderate quantities, from our youth upwards, and are neither *drunk*, nor *drunkards*.

We do not, therefore, admit the dangerous tendency of habits which are so universally sanctioned and approved, and cannot hear them denounced, without resenting it as a reflection on our power of self-control, or smiling in derision at what we regard as the ridiculous austerity of some over-scrupulous reformer, or the unfounded alarm of a credulous fanatic.

But, my friends, is it wise thus to blind ourselves to the true tendency of habits we have contracted, when we see them beguiling multitudes around us into certain and speedy destruction?

Consider the peculiarly seductive nature of the indulgences we are considering; how insidious in their progress; how completely they divest a man of his power of self-control, and leave him to the impulse of appetite and passion, the moment they have been carried beyond a certain point, which can never be known to have been passed, until it is too late to return. Moreover, have you not known,

among those who have been thus overcome, many who appeared to have been endowed with as much ability to struggle successfully with temptation, and who were under as powerful motives to watchfulness and resistance as yourselves? Will not your observation bear me melancholy witness, that neither exalted intellectual powers, nor sound moral principle can always prevent an incipient lust for intoxicating drinks, and that when once it has been felt and obeyed, neither the aspirations of ambition, nor the tender sensibility of honor; the suggestions of interest, nor the remonstrances of friendship; the honors of earth, nor the rewards of heaven; can supply motives sufficiently powerful to check its progress.

In view of these considerations, can it be doubted, that the enticing customs of society, of which I have already, perhaps, spoken too long for your patience, but far too imperfectly for the importance of the topic, are, indeed, most alarming snares for our virtue. And is not that presumption most affectingly reprov'd, which encourages us to continue in ourselves, and to countenance in others, such practices as tend directly to the formation of habits, which are as invincible in their nature, as they are deplorable in their consequences.

The immediate or exciting causes of intemperance vary in particular cases, according to the condition and circumstances of individuals, and the remedies must be directed accordingly.

Anxiety and trouble, whether springing from external embarrassments, or from bitterer fountains

which are opened in the soul, not unfrequently drive the subjects of them into habitual intoxication, and make them covet the waters of death, that they may drink thereof, and lose at once, the perception and remembrance of their sufferings.

How many cases of this kind come to our knowledge, which, instead of being regarded as inviting occasions of benevolent interposition, are either passed by as undeserving our notice, or are visited only with reproach or contumely. We are not touched as we should be by such affecting exhibitions of the weakness of humanity. The soul of man, stricken down by adversity or sorrow, is prone to despair, and will eagerly seize the means of a temporary solace, even at the price of permanent wretchedness.

At such times, the simplest expression of unfeigned interest and sympathy, a word of counsel or encouragement seasonably and kindly administered, or a trifling pecuniary aid heartily bestowed, may open the springs of consolation, awaken hopes, and inspire confidence, which will enable the sufferer to struggle manfully and successfully with troubles, which he would otherwise have sought to drown in the depths of perpetual intoxication.

Examples of confirmed drunkenness, which may be traced to this cause, are by no means rare, and some of them, I am persuaded, might have been saved, by a judicious and tender treatment of those periods of despair, which were the immediate cause of their first excessive indulgences.

The immediate causes of this vice, which operate, generally, on the whole community, are to be found in the abundance of the means by which it is maintained, and the facilities which exist for obtaining them in such forms and quantities as are most favorable to intemperance.

Most unhappily, with us, these means are temptingly cheap and abundant. Spirituous liquors, in all their various forms, are dispersed over the surface of these United States, almost as universally and copiously as the dews and rain of heaven: and it is to be attributed to the fatal facility with which these most powerful means of intoxication are obtained in this country, rather than to any comparative deficiency in the number or power of our moral restraints, that we have been but too justly charged with a disgraceful preeminence over other nations, in respect to the vice we are considering.

They have pervaded and polluted the city, and the village. They have been carried, by the prowling avarice of man, which respects neither religion nor humanity, in the pursuit of gain, far beyond the settlements of those we call civilized, even into the most distant forests of the western world, and have given new horrors to the character and warfare of the deluded savage,—adding to the orgies of his frantic barbarity, the wilder frenzies of intoxication.

But that which particularly deserves our attention in this connexion, is the immense number of licensed houses, where ardent spirits are sold in such quantities, and at such prices, as to be within the

means of the poorest purchaser. A committee from the Parliament of Great Britain, had this subject under consideration a few years since, and after an elaborate statement of facts, and a series of ingenious and eloquent reasonings on them, recommended the reduction of the number of licenses, as one of the most effectual means for diminishing drunkenness.

There can be no doubt, that such establishments operate most powerfully to extend and perpetuate this vice among us. Always open, exhibiting their pernicious commodities in most alluring variety of taste and tint, and generally occupied by a company of congenial souls, anxious to initiate all who come among them into the delights of those excesses, of which they have already proved the mischievous power, they not unfrequently invite the passenger to enter, by the superadded attractions of elegance and convivial pleasure, which they display. Thus furnished, and located everywhere in the midst of a population already predisposed to excess, by the popular customs of unnecessary drinking, which I have noticed before, we can hardly imagine contrivances more ingeniously calculated to ensnare and destroy the young and the old, the gay and the weary, than are the licensed dram-shops, which, in various forms, infest the city and country.

I speak advisedly, when I say, that the community is now suffering severely in this respect, from a perverted construction, or careless administration of the present laws, which were enacted to regulate the granting of licenses to victuallers and taverners.

We should not lightly speak evil of dignities, nor hastily censure those, who in the exercise of discretionary power, entertain different views of duty from ourselves: but it becomes us to inquire, with all freedom and fidelity, how it has happened, that these nuisances have been permitted to multiply themselves as they have done, notwithstanding the legal restraints which have been established to prevent it.

The whole spirit of legislation, on this subject, so far as it may be gathered from the several statutes which have been passed, was evidently directed to the prevention of intemperance; and not, as the present practical interpretation of them would seem to imply, to an augmentation of the public revenue, from the sale of licenses, nor the establishment of a lucrative species of trade, for those who purchase them. The legislature, in permitting licenses to be given to taverners and victuallers, to sell spirituous liquors in small quantities, seem to have been aware, that in showing this indulgence to prevalent opinions and customs in society in regard to the use of them, they were enacting laws which were in danger of receiving a mischievous latitude of construction, and of being perverted to ruinous purposes. They were, therefore, careful to accompany them with every limitation, of which the nature of the case admitted, calculated to prevent their abuse. The Selectmen of each town are required to certify, annually, to the Court of Sessions of the county, how many taverns and victualling shops are "necessary," in their respective towns, "for the entertainment of travellers, and

for the public good ;” and the Justices of the Sessions are expressly charged, to grant no more licenses than are thus deemed *necessary*.

But how shamefully are these salutary restraints evaded in practice. In this county,—where, it is grateful to remark that much more circumspection is at present observed on this point, than formerly,—any one who can procure two friends of reputable standing, able and willing to be bound severally, with him, to his observance of the municipal regulations of his shop, may obtain a license as a victualler, provided the place be not exceptionable, when he is not only entirely destitute of, but does not even pretend to afford such accommodations for entertainment as the law requires of him : his real and only intention in procuring such a license, being, to avail himself of its permission to sell spirit in small quantities, in opening a dram shop in some one of the various forms which these establishments assume ; and thus he is licensed to establish a seminary of idleness, misery, crime, and pauperism—a public evil, and a cause of evil. Under this application of the law, it is, at present, judged, that in this city, six hundred and eightyfive of these shops are “*necessary for the public good.*” In other counties in the commonwealth it is probable that the facilities for obtaining licenses are as great as in ours.

In view of this discrepancy between the spirit of the law and the administration of it, I would respectfully put it to the serious consideration of all who are concerned in the management of this judi-

cial trust, whether they have not too often mistaken the clamorous importunities of individual interest, for well-founded views of the public good—and would inquire, by what process of reasoning they have been brought to the conclusion, from year to year, that the “public good” required more and more of these establishments, while for the last twenty years, at least, the general voice of the wise and virtuous, has been raised against them, as directly productive of that vice which is the greatest scourge and curse of the land.

These questions may be offensive to some, nay, may even be thought impertinent, as proposed by me; but it certainly is the duty as well as the privilege of all who have at heart the honor and happiness of their country, the domestic peace of her citizens, and the purity of public morals, to put such questions freely,—and to demand a reply,—when they see the most wholesome provisions of their statute book, which their own delegated authority has enacted, virtually abrogated, by those who have solemnly sworn to see them faithfully enforced.

My friends, we are assembled this evening, not merely to deplore and deprecate the vice we have been considering, but to take counsel together respecting the means we are to use for its suppression.

Such is the benevolent purpose of the association by whose invitation we have met, and in whose behalf I am permitted to address you, and to be-

speak your countenance and cooperation for their praiseworthy undertaking. We might have expected that an enterprise, so adapted to the moral condition and wants of the community, having for its object the prevention of so much social, domestic and personal misery, and involving such trifling personal sacrifices, in order to carry it on, would have received at once, the ready aid and encouragement of all the friends of human virtue and happiness. But it has unfortunately happened that the suppression of intemperance has been regarded as a hopeless undertaking. A prejudice has taken extensive hold of the public mind, that there is something in the nature or accidents of this vice, which makes it an exception to those moral evils which may be corrected or averted by the combined and judicious exertions of the wise and good.

I have known generous and worthy men enter into other projects of a moral or religious character, of more questionable utility, who were, nevertheless, incurably incredulous, and, of course, in a great measure, indifferent with respect to the feasibility of this ;—and have been surprised to see individuals, who find no difficulty in believing, that by the aid of a few missionaries, they may change the whole religious faith and observances of half the world, utterly despair of being able to do anything to check the progress of an acknowledged and vulgar vice, which is carrying on its ravages under their own personal observation. This scepticism, so paralyzing to be-

nevolent exertions, which has deprived the cause of the aid of many persons who are sincerely desirous of lending their influence wherever it will do good, and which has provoked the ridicule of many more, who will have neither part nor lot in any such matters, springs from misdirected or imperfect views of the subject, and from inadequate conceptions of the effect of moral power. The subject is viewed too much at large, in all its vast extent, connexions, and bearings, at once; and he who thus contemplates it is discouraged, because he forgets, that this immense mass of evil is to be assailed in its parts, and not in the whole; and that, although his single efforts might be lost when directed at large against the whole fabric, they would be abundantly adequate to remove some of its minor supports, which lay within the sphere of his own immediate influence.

Or, he has noticed how obstinate and inveterate the vice is, when settled on any individual; and, perhaps, he inconsiderately regards the predisposition to it, and the state of things which favors its existence, as equally unmanageable with the vice itself; and thus unwittingly confounds the cure of the drunkard, which is indeed nearly hopeless, with the prevention of drunkenness, which is quite another thing. Or, lastly, the very fact, that so monstrous an evil has been tolerated so long in a community, distinguished as ours is, for the philanthropic feelings and conduct of its population, is calculated to leave on the mind of a superficial observer, an impression, that it can-

not be overcome by that moral agency, which has been exerted so successfully in other cases.

It is from such views of the subject, the fallacy of which is at once apparent on examination, that the suppression of intemperance has been regarded as so peculiarly arduous and discouraging a thing to attempt.

This prejudice is doubtless strengthened, in many minds, by the low estimate which is formed of the effect of moral power. They see a few individuals, whose opinions and projects, indeed, they confidently believe to be correct, assailing maxims and practices, which are respected and observed as right and useful, by the great mass of the people. The means seem to be altogether inadequate to the accomplishment of the end, and they cannot be persuaded to join in so unequal a contest.

But they do not consider, that the history of mankind abounds with examples, which illustrate the competency of such means to accomplish far more wonderful revolutions of public opinion, and more thorough changes in popular customs and habits, than any which are contemplated in the reformation I am endeavoring to recommend.

The spread of Christianity in the earth; that surprising process, called, by way of eminence, the Reformation; the abolition of slavery, and other great plans for the melioration of the human condition and character, were all accomplished by the same kind of means as are now at the disposal of those who

have the resolution to employ them, against the crying sin of our land, and of our age.

Not that I would assert any irreverent or extravagant pretensions for the present champions of temperance, by comparing them with the Apostles, and Reformers; but would only advert to their great achievements, to show the vast power of the moral means by which they wrought, and to derive from the contemplation, stimulus and encouragement for those who are called to exert the same species of power, in a good cause, at a period when the facilities and appliances for bringing it to bear successfully on society, are better understood than at any previous time, and in a country which is peculiarly susceptible to its influences, on account of the general intelligence and lively moral sensibility of its inhabitants.

Let me not be understood to represent the suppression of intemperance as an easy undertaking. On the contrary, it is extremely difficult to devise remedies for an evil so extensive and deeply rooted, which shall be radical, and at the same time, not so violently opposed to the present views of society, as to bring odium and opposition to those who propose them, as well as to the cause which they are endeavoring to serve. In common with most of the praiseworthy enterprises we are invited to join, it has already suffered much from the inconsiderate zeal, the extravagant requisitions, and the unseasonable importunity of some of its friends. But let every individual, who is fully persuaded of the im-

portance of this project, use discreetly, in its behalf, that moral power and influence which is, in some degree, the prerogative of every rational being—let us combine and concentrate our individual efforts, by means of associations, which shall operate on the springs of public opinion, prudently and perseveringly, and we need not despair of witnessing, in due time, beneficial results, in some measure corresponding with the magnitude of our undertaking, and abundantly satisfactory to the benevolent spirit which prompted it.

If the experience of the last two years, during which a very commendable degree of activity in this matter has prevailed in the community, could be fully and faithfully exhibited to the public, it would not only prove an effectual antidote to the scepticism I have been combating, but would command the respect and admiration of every ingenuous mind.

By the exertions of the society whose anniversary we now celebrate, aided by others of a similar character, tracts and discourses containing the most impressive and corrective views of the subject of intemperance, as well in popular as in scientific forms, have been spread through the country and earnestly recommended to the perusal of all classes in society. The pulpit and the press have denounced the vice and prescribed the remedies for it. It has been everywhere discussed in public meetings, and has become an interesting topic of private conversation.

A vast number of associations and societies have been formed for the promotion of temperance, comprising many thousands of persons pledged to a total abstinence from spirituous liquors themselves, and to interdict the use of them to all over whom they can exercise sufficient control.

It is but justice to the medical profession, to attribute no small share of the reformation which has already been effected, to the readiness and unanimity with which they have given the sanction of their opinion to correct views of the effects of ardent spirits on the human constitution. Almost every respectable society of physicians in the country has publicly borne testimony against the use of these substances, as unnecessary and hurtful ; and the testimony of a body of men so competent to form a correct opinion on the subject, and so disinterested in their avowal of it, cannot but cooperate powerfully with the dictates of reason and prudence, to establish and propagate these opinions in the public mind.

The success of these operations has far exceeded the anticipations of most of those who have been instrumental in carrying them on.

A few confirmed drunkards, who were thought and said to be abandoned—an epithet which it ill becomes man to apply to any being, whom his Creator suffers to live, the recipient of his common blessings, and the subject of moral influences—a few individuals of this description, have, by judicious management, been restored, and many others

who were fast approaching the same unhappy state, have been saved from the ruin to which they were hastening.

The most authentic statements make it certain that the quantity of ardent spirits consumed, has diminished within the last year, in many places by two thirds, and in still more by one half. They have been dispensed with at political meetings and elections, on military occasions, and at public entertainments, to an extent which would surprise any one, who has not attentively watched the process by which such grateful facts have been developed.

Many retailers have thrown up their licenses,—some voluntarily, from conscientious scruples respecting the traffic which they authorise, and others have been compelled to do so, by the improved state of public opinion in their vicinity.

Such are briefly some of the fruits of our past labors in this cause. To attempt to ascertain the precise extent of the reformation which has taken place, would lead us into details inconsistent with the present occasion. It is abundantly sufficient, however, to satisfy the most incredulous, of the practicability of our undertaking, and to quicken and encourage us in carrying on the work which has been so successfully begun. If we do not greatly mistake the signs of the times, a saving leaven has already been mingled with the elements of public opinion, which will gradually separate from it those cherished absurdities, which I have endeavored to expose as laying at the foundation of

much of the intemperance we witness, and which will finally work out the redemption of this people from a moral bondage, more servile and debasing than the odious political thralldom, which was shaken off by the self-denying virtue of our temperate and heroic forefathers.

Let us all contribute our exertions to accelerate and perfect so desirable a revolution. None of us are so destitute of authority and influence that we cannot do something towards multiplying and strengthening the motives to temperance, among our fellow men, or towards removing the temptations to the opposite vice.

But, we must begin the reformation in ourselves. If not for consistency's sake, it is our truest wisdom to do it for our own sakes. If we are yet safe and sound, amid the general contagion,—and God grant we be not mistaken in this matter—in humble gratitude let us thank that being who has so tempered our constitution, or so favorably ordered the circumstances of our lives, that we have been able to resist noxious influences, which have overcome men of equal wisdom and virtue with ourselves—and while we daily pray to him that we may not be led into temptation, let us scrupulously abstain from those practices and compliances, which are the beginnings of an evil, the end of which, imagination trembles to contemplate.

Those who are intrusted with the care of families, and the education of children, have opportunities for exerting a powerful influence in favor of

temperance which they cannot excuse themselves for neglecting. In the young and the rising generation, if anywhere, we may expect to witness satisfactory results from our instructions and efforts. Their minds are yet unoccupied by false opinions and frivolous apologies in favor of drinking, and habit has not yet bound them to dangerous practices. Parental solicitude cannot be better employed than in giving to its objects correct views of the nature and effects of ardent spirits, and of the various temptations to an intemperate use of them, with which they will be assailed at every step after they have gone forth into the world.

All the economy of the household, which has any relation to these substances, should be ordered with a view to inspire a salutary dread of them, in the minds of your children. If they are ever suffered to pass your threshold, let them be carefully marked and distinguished as dangerous liquors. Let them be removed from the places they now occupy beside the substantial articles of human sustenance, and consigned to the same shelf with your laudanum, and medicinal essences, if indeed you are so unwise as to keep any such substances in your house.

Banish from your dwellings all the paraphernalia of drinking which conformity to absurd customs has heaped on your shelves, and let the domestic altar no more be lighted with this "strange fire."

Strive to divest the drinking of intoxicating liquors,

of the agreeable associations with which it is too generally connected, and let it be represented to your children and dependants as it really is, a vulgar and dangerous indulgence of a sensual lust.

Do these things, and on all proper occasions, without ostentation or boasting, let it be known to your neighbors and the world, wherefore you do them, and your parental and social duty, in respect to this important matter, will have been faithfully performed.

Addressing those who know the power of fashion, and have observed how constantly it operates from superiors to subordinates, it is scarcely necessary for me to remark, that such examples of reformation must first be exhibited, by those who are distinguished by their intelligence, education, or standing in society. Much of the intemperance among the poorer classes, springs from their propensity to imitate the practices of their more favored fellow-men. The habit of unnecessary drinking, casting off as it descends, the various restraints which are imposed on it in the higher classes, by more enlightened moral principle, by greater strength of resistance, and by a higher estimate of character, from being a mere item, (an useless one, to be sure, and often a hurtful one,) among the various luxuries of fashionable life, it becomes, at last, a positive and gross vice.

The influential portion of the community must, therefore, make a sacrifice of their habits in this particular, which perhaps, are not, in themselves, believed to be productive of any very great evil, in

consideration of the propensity of their inferiors to carry them to fatal excess. The christian rule of self-denial, in such a case, is explicit, as stated by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when he declares, with a sacred regard to the influence of his example, "If meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend."

It is particularly desirable to engage in this reformation those individuals, whose pursuits and situation are such, as to bring many laboring men under their control or influence. It is in the power of the proprietors and agents of our manufacturing establishments, which are now rapidly multiplying, to extend the blessings of temperance, and at the same time, advance their own interest, and the welfare of their workmen, by interdicting the use of intoxicating drinks, to all who are employed in and about their works. In such places, a promiscuous mass of people is thrown together, who are necessarily destitute of many salutary restraints, which operate on individuals in other situations; and experience has everywhere shown, that the influences and associations of these establishments, are, at the best, but ill adapted to preserve a moral and manly character in the subordinate persons who are subjected to them. Intemperance is the besetting sin of such people, and is the principal cause of their licentiousness and degradation. Let the owners and superintendents of factories, then, if they would not

have them become public nuisances, carefully guard their dependents against this all-corrupting sin.

You have just been calling on your country for protection and encouragement for your industry and enterprise, and she has extended her fostering arm in your behalf. You surely will not think it too much for her to expect, in return, that you will do what you can to preserve her from the evils which other countries are now suffering, from an ignorant, besotted, and turbulent manufacturing population. If so, let the economy of your establishment be such as to banish ardent spirits from the place. Let it be understood, that you place no confidence in those men, who are in the habit of "putting an enemy into their mouth, to steal away their brains." Do not tolerate, on your premises, any of those reservoirs of subtle poisons, and receptacles of bad company, which will tempt your workmen to "spend their money for that which is not bread, and the reward of their labor for that which satisfieth not." Make such provision for their instruction and recreation, as shall keep them alive to their duties as moral agents, and to their rights as free citizens, and your interest will indeed be identified with your country's, and will become one of the strongest pillars of her wealth and independence.

We can speak with more confidence respecting the practicability and advantages of withholding intoxicating liquors from laborers and manufacturers, since the publication of several successful experiments in this matter, recently

communicated in a letter to the President of the Rhode Island Coal Company by Mr John Clowes the superintendent of their works.\*

While they illustrate the great moral power which is in the hands of men in his situation, they present a bright example of the faithful and generous exercise of it in behalf of those who are its objects, which is worthy of all imitation. "When I came to Rhode Island, in the last part of 1826," says he, "I found that the workman who could not, and did not drink his pint of whiskey per day, was not allowed to work." Not a week passed without a general combat of from twenty to thirty at a time, engaged with their various implements of labor, to the danger of their lives, and the ruin of the works. All this was the effect of the usual allowance of grog." "Early in 1827, I commenced a general revolution with a determination to do away with the worst of all evils, and greatest curse ever inflicted on a workman, that of allowing him liquor while at work, and permitting him to have it in his house." "Keeping steady to this, I had the satisfaction to see my plans gradually bearing down the long cherished habit, and a very perceptible improvement take place in every family. And on the first Monday in October last, every man came up to the counting house, and with one voice, of their own free will, desired me to cease giving out any more grog."

\* The Unitarian, No. IV.

“Those families, who twelve months ago, were clothed in rags, and with not a week’s provision beforehand—in December last, were both man, woman and child, well clad, and three months’ provision beforehand ; besides cash in hand, none having less than twenty, and some near one hundred dollars ; not one on the sick list, but every soul in excellent health.”

“In all this great work,” he continues, “the language *you shall* or *I insist*, was never once used. There was no compulsion.”

In the sequel, he briefly relates his method of conducting the reformation, and further informs us, that the experiment at Rhode Island is not the first or only one of the kind, in which he has succeeded. “I have been,” says he, “about eighteen years actively engaged in breaking up old customs, stemming the common prejudices and habits of workmen, and in six different establishments have proved victorious, and by the blessing of Him who aids his own cause, I have triumphed over many an old and stubborn profligate, as individual cases.”

These plain facts must appeal to the better judgment and feelings of all to whom they are presented, with an intrinsic force which forbids comment.

The praises of men, who have thus faithfully and successfully improved the opportunities for doing good which they enjoy, are best proclaimed in their works. They need not the panegyrics

which our hearts burn to bestow on such affecting exhibitions of disinterestedness and humanity. Their recompense is within them, and their reward is higher than the praises of men. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, is upon them, and they have laid hold on that most precious promise, graciously offered to such as are instrumental, in "turning a sinner from the error of his way."



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BUREAU OF  
RECORDS

# ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY

FOR THE

### Suppression of Intemperance,

MAY 26, 1828.

BY JOSHUA B. FLINT, M. D.

PRINTED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

BOSTON,

BOWLES & DEARBORN, 72, WASHINGTON STREET.  
1828.

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY

FOR THE

Suppression of Intemperance,

MAY 20, 1823.

BY JOSHUA B. FLINT, M. D.

PRINTED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

BOSTON,

BOWLES & DEARBORN, 72, WASHINGTON STREET.

1823.

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