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An Address, Delivered at Brunswick, April 27, 1814

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Archiv

Rev. Benjⁿ Tappan
from his
Box
July

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT BRUNSWICK, APRIL 27, 1814;

BEFORE THE

BRUNSWICK, TOPSHAM, & HARPSWELL SOCIETY,

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION OF INTEMPERANCE.



BY PARKER CLEVELAND, A. M.

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS, AND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY,
IN BOWDOIN COLLEGE.



"Taste not, handle not, touch not" should be inscribed on every vessel, that contains spirits, in the house of a man, who wishes to be cured of habits of intemperance.

RUSH'S MEDICAL INQUIRIES, Vol. I. Page. 384. second Edition.

.....

BOSTON.

Printed by Chester Stebbins.

1814.

" VOTED, that the thanks of the ' Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell Society for the Suppression of Intemperance' be presented to PROFESSOR CLEVELAND for his very excellent Address, this day delivered ;— And that the Hon. JACOB ABBOT, the Hon. BENJAMIN J PORTER, and Dr. ISAAO LINCOLN be a committee to request a copy for publication."

JOSEPH McKEEN, Secretary.

Brunswick, April 27th, 1814.

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

THE numerous official duties, which devolve upon me in the college, and which are well known to many of those, who are now present, will, I hope, sufficiently apologise for some of the imperfections, which you may perceive in the following address. And, to a part of this audience, I must be permitted to remark, *quod hoc genere dicendi meæ vitæ rationes nuper prohibuerunt.*

It certainly cannot be necessary, or appropriate to address any remarks to those present, on the supposition, that *they* are in habits of intemperance; for surely *this house* is the last place to look for such characters, either at this time, or on the sabbath. Equally unnecessary must it be to describe to you the phenomena of intemperance, as exhibited in profane and disgusting conversation, or in frantic or mischievous actions, with a view to deter you from the crime. For, if the Lacedemonians could excite in their children a detestation of this vice by *occasionally* presenting to their view the odious spectacle of drunken slaves, surely the almost *daily* examples, which present themselves to your eyes, ought to produce the deepest abhorrence.

The only topic, which remains, is an attempt to excite you to a judicious and resolute progress in the attainment of that object, for which this society was instituted. To such exertions the motives are extremely numerous and pressing. Your feelings, indeed, cannot fail of being warmly interested; but the impulse of feeling is often irresolute and imprudent; and, though useful to stimulate, should never be permitted to direct in serious pursuits. There ought then to be impressed on your minds a deep and solemn conviction of the

infinite importance of the object in view, to yourselves, your children, and the nation itself.

Your society has, in its constitution, limited its exertions to the single object of restraining intemperance.¹ But, if it is true, as a general remark, that no one vice ever exists alone, it is most emphatically true, that intemperance is *never found alone*; on the contrary, it is always attended by a hideous train of other vices.

Hence it appears, that, if you obtain success, it must be effected by no moderate exertions. The evil, against which you contend, is not a feeble plant, nor sickly shrub, which a single effort can uproot, and disengage from the soil; but it is a poisonous tree, whose branches have spread wide; the roots are interwoven with those, which belong to plants of a kindred nature. You have not merely to prune, or even cut down this tree; the very soil, in which it grows, must be purified from those roots, which would otherwise again germinate.

It will now be our object to state a number of considerations, which ought to excite you to the adoption of some effectual measures to check this growing evil, of which we have already witnessed so many destructive consequences.

1. Instead of permitting this circumstance, that intemperance is accompanied by *numerous other vices*, to intimidate or discourage, we select it, as one consideration, which ought to stimulate you to vigorous exertion. For, in proportion as you destroy the habits of intemperance, in the same degree you cause industry to take the place of idleness; you pour a thousand comforts into families now suffering with hunger, or cold, or sickness, in consequence of the idleness and intemperance of a parent. In the same proportion, as habits of inebriation are checked, your streets will become free from noisy and mischievous rioters; your ears will be much less frequently saluted by profanity, even from boys; more especially will you in this way do much to destroy those habits of *gaming* and *debauchery*, which are the sure attendants of intemperance, particularly in the earlier periods of life. For, although

¹ By the amendment of the constitution, at the last anniversary, this efforts of the society are in future to be directed against other immoralities, beside intemperance.

gaming and debauchery may sometimes have a priority to intemperance in point of time, still these vices never did, and never will exist, for any considerable length of time, unconnected with each other. Examples of this threefold curse on society crowd upon us in every town, and in every *village*. In fine, if you can in a good degree suppress the habits of intemperance, you will cause the sabbath to be better observed, especially by a certain class of the community ; and, when this can be effected, society will appear with a new face.

But will you reply to all this by enquiring, whether *the Ethiopian can change the color of his skin, or the Leopard his spots?* Will you say habits of intemperance have become so deeply rooted, that reformation is impracticable? This may indeed be the case in some instances, especially among the more advanced in life. But, for your encouragement, I will recite a paragraph, extracted from a very popular, and, it is believed, very useful pamphlet on the practicability of a reformation in morals.² “When the subject of reformation is proposed, multitudes turn their eyes to places of the greatest depravation, and to criminals of the most abandoned character ; and, because these strong holds cannot be carried, and these sons of Belial reformed, they conclude, that nothing can be done. But reformation is not the work of a day ; and, if the strong holds of vice cannot be stormed, there is still a silent, certain way of reformation. Immoral men do not live forever ; and if good heed be taken, that they draw no new recruits from our families, death will achieve for us a speedy victory. We may stand still, and see the salvation of God. Death will lay low the sons of Anak, and a generation of another spirit will occupy without resistance their fortified places.”

But, if, in a certain point of view, the sentiment just recited is calculated to afford encouragement, it must, at the same time, impress on our minds a most melancholy consideration ; for it is usually the case, that the victim of intemperance either meets an untimely grave,

² Discourse delivered at Newhaven, by the Rev. Lyman Beecher ; and lately reprinted at Andover, Mass. page 14.

or lingers, toward the decline of his years, burdensome to himself and his family, useless to society, and then dies, unlamented indeed and soon forgotten by man ; but, alas, his sins are registered in heaven. And is there a ray of hope, although infinitely small, of causing such a man to see the error of his way, most surely our exertions should not be wanting.

2. A second motive to immediate and powerful exertion is the *extent*, which this evil has *already* reached. Travel through the United States ; but few villages can be entered, especially at certain times of the day or evening, without perceiving the votaries of intemperance, either clamorous and disposed to quarrel, or, if silent, with debilitated limbs, refusing to discharge their duty. Enter their resorts ; you will there find the *hoary headed*, the *middle aged*, and the *young*, parents, brothers, and sons, collected in the same circle, inhaling a fetid air, and a still more destructive beverage, and demanding curses on themselves, and on all around them. But with the ruin of those, who compose this circle, that of numerous families is intimately connected, not merely by taking from them the means of subsistence, but by the powerful influence of example, especially when coinciding with depraved propensities. How alarming the fact, that children, too young to labor, should be introduced into such fatal company. This picture is by no means the offspring of imagination ; it is a faithful description of well known facts.

But the habits, which we have just described, are by no means confined to villages. I again appeal to the traveller through New England, or the United States —nor need he stop his carriage to enquire, whether intemperance has preceded him. While he surveys the house, the barn, the fence, the field, and the garden, he anticipates the proper answer. Within the recollection of the speaker, houses and barns have disappeared ; and the families of their once independent possessors have become nearly *extinct* by the enervating power of ardent spirits.

The practice of intemperance, however, is by no means confined to the vagrant and most worthless part of the community. Many, whose situation and con-

nexions designate them, as belonging to a respectable class in society, are by slow degrees, *perhaps imperceptible to themselves*, entering those paths, which will inevitably terminate in destruction.

But do you enquire, is this evil indeed *so extensive* and alarming? Is not intemperance confined to a small number? But, were this the fact, would it prove, that there is no reason to be alarmed? Would a contagious disease excite no alarm, because it has, as yet, *destroyed but a few*, although hundreds exhibit the symptoms of its approach? If gangrene appear in the extremity only of a limb, dare you assert, that the whole system is not in danger? On the contrary, is not this the very moment for exertion to check the farther progress of the evil? And is it not, then, our duty immediately and vigorously to counteract the progress of intemperance? Is not that most surely an *alarming disease*, which poisons the animal system, distempers the passions, enfeebles the mind, and corrupts the morals?

But we do not admit, that habits of intemperance are confined to a *very small* portion of the community. Could you take an accurate census of all those, in whom these habits are only *commencing*, of those, in whom they have made *considerable progress*, and of those, in whom they are already *confirmed*, would the aggregate be so very small? Perhaps, on our first view of the extent of this evil, we are in danger of confining our ideas to that class of intemperate citizens, who almost daily appear in our streets with ghastly countenances and trembling limbs. But, would our estimate be correct; should we in fact, do justice to character, were we to *limit* the appellation of intemperate to such persons? Would you exclude from this class the laborer, who devotes one fourth or one eighth of his daily earnings to the purchase of ardent spirit, although he may still remain sufficiently sober to carry home to his impoverished family a scanty meal? Has not the man, who drinks from one to two gallons of spirits a week, some claim to be called intemperate, although he may not lose one hour from labor, during that time? And where will you place him, who refrains, perhaps entirely, for five days, and then in-

dulges, till he is rendered ill natured or foolish ? And permit me to enquire, if he, who has commenced the daily use of ardent spirit *before his breakfast*, does not appear to have a constitution somewhat predisposed to become infected with this disease ?

Now, if we include in our estimate all the preceding descriptions of character, and I do not perceive, that any of them can be fairly omitted, how many shall we find in one town ? Some towns, no doubt, will furnish a much greater number, than others. But, let a fair average be obtained, and multiply this by the number of towns in Massachusetts ;—extend the estimate through New England, and through the United States. And will it then appear strange, that *more than twenty five million gallons* of ardent spirits are *annually* employed for the purposes of intemperance ? We say for *purposes of intemperance* ; for the whole quantity, annually consumed in the United States, is more than *thirty three millions gallons*, and from this we have deducted *eight million gallons*, which we suppose may have been employed in a manner less exceptionable, or even justifiable, and necessary ; thus leaving the above mentioned excess of *twenty five million gallons*. —Now the whole population of the United States is somewhat more than *seven millions* ; from this sum we may deduct for *slaves*, who are not allowed the use of ardent spirit, for *children*, and for *women* and *others*, who drink little or none, nearly *four millions*, leaving a remainder of nearly two millions and a half. It is then this remainder, *a little short of two millions and a half*, which unnecessarily and injuriously consume, on a low estimate, *more than twenty five million gallons* of ardent spirit in one year ; averaging nearly *ten gallons* to each person.

It appears then, that, if we make a fair estimate of those, who deserve to be called intemperate, or look at the quantities of intoxicating spirit, which are unnecessarily and wickedly consumed, we shall find, that this evil is already extensive and alarming.

3. We mention, as a third motive to exertion, *the dangers*, to which individuals, families, and society stand exposed, unless such exertion be made. These

dangers, as they appear in the consequences of intemperance, are too obvious to all to require even an enumeration. We shall therefore here notice *certain circumstances*, which tend greatly to *increase* these dangers, and to which the public attention has not, perhaps, been sufficiently directed.

The first circumstance of this nature, which we mention, is the *general unconcern*, which appears to exist in regard to the prevalence of this evil. Public attention has indeed been awakened, and public feeling somewhat alarmed in the course of the last eighteen months; but we have reason to believe, that the progress of intemperance is still viewed with too much indifference.

Insensibility to danger is always an alarming symptom, more especially, when the evil to be apprehended advances by imperceptible degrees, and is, in its own nature, capable of a certain degree of concealment. The last mentioned circumstance applies in its full force to habits of intemperance; for it is well known, that individuals may indulge their appetite for intoxicating spirits to a considerable degree, before the attention even of neighbors is arrested.³

This insensibility of the public mind to the practice of intemperance has, in some places, become so great, that it can hardly be distinguished from silent approbation; or, at least, the effect produced is the same. For, if we perceive a friend attempting to destroy himself or injure others, it is of very little consequence, *so far as he is concerned*, whether we view his actions with cold indifference, or tacit approbation.

Several causes tend to produce, or increase this insensibility to our danger. Intemperance advances by degrees, and obtains access by numerous avenues, which escape our notice. It saps the foundation; but we are not alarmed and in motion, till the building *begins to fall*. Instances of intoxication have become so

³ It is also undoubtedly true, that many persons have continued for years in habits of intemperance, fully believing, that neighbors and the public were unacquainted with their true character. A remarkable instance of this kind occurred some time since in the state of Massachusetts. A mechanic had been in habits of intemperance for eight or ten years; but, when this trait in his character was mentioned to him by a friend, he was surprised, and frankly confessed, that he did not suppose any individual was acquainted with the fact. Might it not be sometimes beneficial in cases, where there are *good reasons* to believe, that habits of intemperance are *actually* forming, to communicate such suspicions in a friendly manner, to the individual himself?

common, that they scarcely attract our notice, even for the moment, or lead our minds into sober reflection on the crime itself, or its dangerous consequences.

This insensibility to danger is undoubtedly increased by our natural disinclination to exertion, especially, if such exertion will probably be attended with many difficulties, or be inconsistent with some favorite interest. Hence attempts are seldom made to check corrupt practices, till they have acquired strength; and this additional strength then operates, as a new objection.

The dearest interests of *future* generations, seen through the dim medium of thirty or forty years, do not excite us; and *distant* dangers are seldom sufficient to alarm the mind. Hence the sullen, distant murmur of Vesuvius, and the columns of smoke, which already begin to ascend from its sides, cannot induce the inhabitants at its foot to quit their accustomed dwellings—they linger—they hope—and nothing but the actual arrival of fiery torrents of lava can convince them, that danger is near.

Another circumstance, which increases our danger, arises from the extensive influence of *public opinion*, in some degree, already corrupted. If it is true, that the prevalence of intoxication, especially among the lower classes of society, be viewed with criminal indifference, it is equally true, that the excesses of intemperance, when committed under *certain circumstances*, and by *certain portions* of our citizens, receive from public opinion that indulgence, which effectually counteracts the principle of *shame*,⁴ and encourages to a repetition.

The effect of opinion on public manners and morals is incalculable. Still it must be remembered, that this influence is, in a great degree, *mutual*; for opinion itself originates principally from customs and habits, which have gradually become established.

⁴ A sense of shame is a very powerful principle, and may sometimes be rendered active by a very trivial circumstance. Dr. Rush relates an anecdote of a farmer in England, who had been many years in the practice of coming home intoxicated from a market town. On a certain day, while in the market, he observed appearances of rain; anxious to secure his hay, which was then out and ready to be housed, he hastened home, before he had taken his usual quantity of grog. Upon coming into his house, one of his children, a boy of six years old, ran to his mother, and cried out, "O, mother! father is come home, and he is not drunk." The father, who heard this exclamation, was so severely rebuked by it, that he suddenly became a sober man.

We are sensible, that many of the subsequent remarks might have been introduced, when speaking of the extent, which intemperance has already reached. But we chose to refer them to this place, that we might examine, under a connected view, the several classes of society, in regard to an *unnecessary, injurious, and intemperate* use of wine and ardent spirits. If the result of this examination should prove unfavorable to the present state of public morals, we may safely infer, that public opinion is already somewhat corrupted; and, unless a favorable change can be effected, must prove a powerful obstacle to a general reformation of morals.

It is unnecessary to say much on this subject in regard to the most idle, vicious, and profligate part of the community. Look at our jails and workhouses. Their miserable tenants, introduced to these gloomy abodes by crimes, diseases, or poverty, have almost universally commenced their disgraceful career with *the cheerful glass*; and it was the same glass, so often repeated, which inflamed their passions, and impelled them to the commission of those crimes, for which they now suffer; it is that same glass, cheerful indeed to the animal spirits, but bitter as death in its effects, which has wasted their bodies by premature disease, and subjected them to the evils of poverty.

Look now at those, who labor either on land, or at sea. This class of citizens is exceedingly valuable and important. In them lies, in a considerable degree, the strength of the nation; but how rapidly is their strength becoming weakness. To this portion of the community your strongest efforts should be directed. With them every topic of persuasion, derived from their own interest and comfort, must be employed; with them every argument, which reason and religion can furnish must be urged.

It is capable of demonstration, both by reason and fact, that the man, who drinks one pint, or even half that quantity of ardent spirits in a day, is, on the whole, *enfeebled by it*; and will not, other things being equal,

perform so much labor as he, who *entirely refrains*.⁵ Facts declare this truth, whether you compare the laborer, who claims his daily allowance of spirit with the more sober and abstemious of the present day, or of former times. And a moment's reflection will convince us that the strength and tone of the system must be impaired by such frequent excitement and subsequent depression. In proof of this, observe the man, accustomed to the *daily use* of ardent spirits, but, by accident, deprived of his allowance; he complains of debility and languor. But where is his wonted strength? Present him a glass of spirits, and, with less equivocation, than did Samson, he will declare to you, wherein *much of his strength lies*.⁶

Still in regard to many of this class we may safely suppose, that they have seldom or never been intoxicated. But are they not already treading in that path, which so frequently terminates in gross intemperance? Their chief danger undoubtedly lies in the habitual and *daily use* of ardent spirits. For it is an undoubted fact, that he, who has begun to apply this unnatural excitement to his system, either twice or three times a day, has left the path of temperance, and passed the first grand barrier between sobriety and intemperance. These habits, if restrained, produce uneasiness, and thus invite a continuance; but, if continued, they rarely fail of creating a fondness for the intoxicating position.

⁵ Dr. Rush says, "I have known many instances of persons, who have followed the most laborious employments for many years in the open air, and in warm and cold weather, who never drank any thing but *water*, and enjoyed uninterrupted good health. Dr. Mosely, who resided many years in the West Indies, says, "I aver from my own knowledge and custom, as well as the many observations of many other people, that those, who drink nothing but *water*, or make it their principal drink, are but little affected by the climate, and can undergo the greatest fatigue without inconvenience, and are never subject to troublesome or dangerous diseases."

Med. Inq. vol. i. p. 353.

The same authority says, "*molasses* and *water*, also *vinegar* and *water*, sweetened with sugar or molasses, form an agreeable drink in warm weather. It is pleasant and cooling, and tends to keep up those gentle and uniform sweats, on which health and life often depend. Vinegar and water constituted the only drink of the soldiers of the Roman republic; and it is well known they marched and fought in a warm climate, and beneath a load of arms, which weighed sixty pounds."

Idem, vol. i. p. 357.

Once more, the same celebrated writer remarks, "let it not be said ardent spirits have become necessary from habit in harvest, and in other seasons of uncommon and arduous labor. The habit is a bad one, and may easily be broken." For this purpose he recommends the allowing of "higher wages to laborers, than are common, and a sufficient quantity of any of the pleasant and wholesome liquors." *Idem*, vol. i. p. 359.

Cider, malt liquors, milk and water, and coffee, are to be ranked among the "pleasant and wholesome liquors."

⁶ Not long since a farmer, who had, for some time, been addicted to a free use of ardent spirits entered a store in this town, and requested paper, &c. for writing a letter. He was then sober; but, on attempting to write, the debility and tremor of his hand prevented. He called for a glass of rum, and again attempted to write, but did not succeed. A second glass was taken; with this his strength returned, and he was now able to direct his pen with sufficient steadiness.

This appetite may, at first, be indulged to great excesses on certain public days only, or at some convivial meeting; but the appetite, thus far indulged, is unwilling to wait for the return of anniversaries; it demands more frequent gratification. The year must be diminished to months; but the habit strengthens, and, in a short time, we perceive daily oblations are made at the shrine of intemperance.⁷

We by no means contend, that the daily use of ardent spirits always progresses in this *rapid* manner to *so fatal* a termination; but we know, that this is *very frequently* the result; we know, that *many*, who are now the slaves of intemperance, have been gradually formed, by the method just described, from the class of respectable laborers.⁸ It has been remarked in a recent publication on this subject, that "any man, who should drink at his own expense, as often in the day, as he sometimes drinks at another's, must be considered, as standing with his feet in slippery places, indeed on the very brink of ruin."⁹

It has been computed, that *more than six thousand* persons die *yearly* in the United States, victims to intemperance.¹⁰ Could the lives of these unfortunate persons, could the various steps, and almost trivial cir-

7 Numerous instances might be adduced to support this reasoning. We mention one to show the increasing strength of the appetite. "A citizen of Philadelphia, once of a fair and sober character, drank *toddy* for many years, as his constant drink. From this he proceeded to drink *grog*. After a while nothing would satisfy him, but slings, made of equal parts of rum and water, with a little sugar. From slings he advanced to *raw rum*, and from common rum to Jamaica spirits. Here, he rested for a few months, but at length, finding Jamaica spirits were not strong enough to warm his stomach, he made it a constant practice to throw a table spoonful of ground pepper, into each glass of his spirits, in order, to use his own words, 'to take off their coldness.' He soon after died a martyr to his intemperance."
Rush's Med. Inq. vol. i. p. 367.

8 It is undoubtedly true, that "laborers bear with great difficulty long intervals between their meals. To enable them to support the waste of their strength, their stomachs should be constantly, but moderately stimulated by aliment; and this is best done by their eating *four or five times* in a day, during the seasons of great bodily exertion." Food "whether of animal or vegetable nature, lessens the desire, as well as the necessity, for cordial drinks, and impart equable and durable strength to every part of the system."
Idem, vol. i. p. 360.

9 See Circular, addressed to the members of the Massachusetts society for suppressing intemperance. 1814.

10 If the opinion of some gentlemen be correct, we must add to the number of those, whose days have been shortened by the use of ardent spirits, many individuals, who have fallen victims to the late prevailing epidemic. It is asserted, that those, who have made use of the *whisky*, recently distilled in New England, are *peculiarly liable* to the ravages of this fever. But, whatever influence it may have in predisposing the system to this disease in particular, we know, that this *new whisky* is extremely injurious to the health of those, who use it. It is true, no man is *obliged* to purchase and drink it; but, notwithstanding this, every *distiller* of *whisky* ought to be viewed, as an enemy to the best interests of society; nor are the *retailers* of this liquor to suppose, that they have but a small share in the guilt of corrupting and *destroying* their fellow citizens; and all this for the paltry object of gaining a few pence. Is it not a fact, that some retailers have disguised the taste and appearance of their *whisky* to deceive those customers, who would otherwise be afraid to purchase it?

cumstances, by which their fatal habits were formed, be faithfully recorded, we doubt not but that the preceding remarks would receive ample confirmation.

One important reflection here occurs. If these daily habits of the young ardent spirit are so dangerous to the laborer, and frequently productive of such dreadful consequences to himself and his family, we would seriously enquire, whether all the criminality be confined to the unhappy victim. Is not the employer, who permits, and, in a certain degree, encourages these habits, *responsible* for the consequences of *his own actions* upon others? And would not the influence of that portion of the community, which employs and pays the other portion, be of incalculable benefit, if mildly and faithfully exercised?

Let us now extend our enquiries to that class of citizens, whose privileges have been greater, and who, of course, ought to possess more extensive information, more refined manners, and more improved minds, than can be supposed to exist under circumstances less favorable. And, if we *here* find indications of the encroachment and progress of intemperance, we may most certainly infer, that public opinion is too indulgent toward these excesses, and views both the evil and its consequences with a criminal indifference.

To gain information on this point, let us look at the frequent convivial, and, I may add, nocturnal meetings of those, who move in the refined walks of life. Excesses, which would *still* be considered by the public *somewhat* disgraceful in the light of day, are here not very unfrequent. How extensive and fatal the influence, when these excesses are committed by those, who stand in the important relation of *parents*.

Look now at our public celebrations of important national events; at the anniversaries of various societies, whatever may be their object; look at the more polished parties, assembled for the express purpose of refined and *rational* amusement; in these several places shall we find every individual conducting under the influence of a decent and *gentlemanly* sobriety? Far be it from me to intimate, that instances of intemperance on these occasions are not confined to a very small number,

when compared with the whole. But the evil, to which I would particularly *direct your attention*, is the indifference, with which these excesses appear to be viewed by a great majority of the temperate. The same individuals, who have repeatedly debased themselves by absolute drunkenness, are still permitted to retain their standing in society, ■ correct public sentiment, properly expressed, would undoubtedly produce reformation, or sink the offender to his proper level. A

But can our examination stop here? There is yet another class, to which our attention has not been directed. I mean those, who are distinguished *for talents*, who have devoted themselves more or less to literature, and possess highly cultivated minds, and who fill respectable stations in *civil society*, or in the *learned professions*. But how shall we answer the enquiry? will not the influence of *science*, superadded to that of reason and religion, preserve *this class* from the unhallowed scenes of intemperance? Shall we not, *among the sons of science*, seek in vain for votaries of this red eyed demon? Would to heaven we might. But far, very far otherwise is the fact; nor shall we find the number so very few, when we consider the smallness of this class, and their distinguished obligations to be examples of temperance.

It is a melancholy and alarming truth, that, among gentlemen, who hold respectable and important offices in civil life, or who are employed in the learned professions, instances of intemperance are not uncommon; And still more alarming is the fact, that such instances appear to be annually increasing.

But, whence is it, that so many young gentlemen, of liberal education, whose acquirements are respectable, whose prospects are bright, and whose usefulness is just commencing, are so prematurely cut off by that flood of intemperance, which threatens to overwhelm our land? Whence is it, that our nation is deprived, *by intemperance in early life*, of so many young men, who seem destined for distinction in the sciences of medicine and law; and, may I not add, of some, who might perhaps have been prepared to teach the ways of God to man?

On this subject permit me to remark, that *fatal intemperance* is perhaps always the result of *habit*; but habit is seldom the offspring of a month, or a year. It may further be remarked, that *even habits* of intemperance do not *suddenly* destroy the healthy and vigorous constitution of youth. If then we observe in young men, who have but *recently* completed their education, and are just entering the several departments of civil and literary life, the *fatal symptoms* of intemperance; it we perceive a firm and vigorous constitution *already in ruins*, is not the conclusion irresistible, that these destructive habits must have originated at an *early* period, and been the growth of *years*? Is there not reason to fear, that, in many instances, at least, these habits have commenced in our nurseries of science; and that many of our sons have acquired their fondness for this fatal poison, while embraced in the arms of their *Alma Mater*? How melancholy, how absurd, that, in the groves of Academies, should be contracted those habits, by which the flame of genius is extinguished, and by which those talents, which were capable of shining with lustre at the bar, and in the senate, or of extending the domains of art and science, are buried in darkness, and the nation deprived of its hopes.

If such then is the state of facts, must not the extensive progress of intemperance have been viewed with criminal indifference by the public eye? Must not public opinion have regarded it with an indulgence, amounting to silent approbation? Could this odious vice have otherwise found admittance into *every circle*? Could such ravages have otherwise been produced during the last twenty years among all classes of citizens? But, unless immediate and effectual exertions are made to check the progress of this evil, another period of twenty years will produce a deterioration of public morals incalculably greater, than has already been effected; for *hitherto* the good principles and habits, which *our fathers* cherished and practised, have extended a favorable influence to their posterity. This influence is nearly extinct; and what now remains, unless the friends of good order and good morals become sensible of their danger, and unite their most strenuous efforts

to check the progress of intemperance. And is not the preceding view of the subject calculated to impress on the instructors of youth a sense of their great responsibility in regard to the morals of those, committed to their care?

4. The exertions, which have been recommended, will have an indirect, but beneficial influence on the more temperate part of the community. The frequent use of wine and ardent spirits, which has of late been so generally introduced into the social circle and friendly visit, has a pernicious influence on the young. In fact, these stimulating liquids are more or less injurious to all, when taken, *merely because they are offered*, and when no particular reason exists for such indulgence. But do you enquire, if I would banish these liquids, and permit their names to appear only on the recipe of the physician? I reply by saying, that *some* varieties of distilled spirits have their peculiar and *proper* uses; but there is an *infinite difference* between a salutary and well regulated application of this powerful stimulus to the human system, and that frequent and unnecessary use of it, which enervates and destroys.¹¹

It is, perhaps, acknowledged by all, that a free and daily use of ardent spirits is injurious to the health. But it is equally true, that a *moderate indulgence*, if entirely unnecessary, is more or less prejudicial to sound health. This is perfectly evident, whether we examine the chemical nature and properties of these liquids, or their effects on the system, when employed in excessive quantities. If such pernicious effects can be produced by the application of *repeated doses*, although each be small in quantity, is it reasonable to suppose, that half the number will produce no effect? On the contrary, unless the state of the health, or other circumstances be such, that the peculiar action of this

11 Ardent spirits "are said to be necessary in very cold weather. This is far from being true; for the temporary warmth, they produce, is always succeeded by a greater disposition in the body to be affected by cold. Warm dresses, and a plentiful meal just before exposure to the cold are a much more durable method of preserving the heat of the body in cold weather."

"They are said to be necessary in very warm weather. Experience proves, that they increase, instead of lessening the effects of heat upon the body, and thereby dispose to diseases of all kinds."

"Nor do ardent spirits lessen the effects of hard labor upon the body. There is no nourishment in them. The strength, they produce in labor, is of a transient nature, and is always followed by a sense of weakness and fatigue."

Rush's Med. Inq. vol. i. p. 350.

powerful stimulus may be expended in a salutary manner, its use, even in small quantities must be injurious.¹²

Its injurious effects may not indeed be always immediately perceived. But the constitution hereby becomes predisposed to the reception of disease, and contagion is hereby rendered active in cases, where it would otherwise remain harmless. Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia, has remarked, that ardent spirits "dispose to every form of acute disease; they moreover *excite fevers* in persons predisposed to them from other causes." And no doubt in many cases, where it is little suspected, various diseases are greatly aggravated by a previous use of ardent spirits.¹³

Let us, for a moment, consider the composition of these intoxicating liquids, their *probable* mode of action on the human constitution, and the effects, which, in certain cases, have resulted from an immoderate use of ardent spirits.

All distilled spirits consist of two ingredients; one is aqueous or watery; the other is called *alcohol*; this *latter* ingredient constitutes the spirituous part, and to this belongs *all* the peculiar powers of rum, brandy, &c. It is the opinion of some naturalists, that, when ardent spirits are received into the stomach, a considerable portion of this alcoholic or spirituous ingredient is taken up by the *absorbing vessels*, without being decomposed; and the whole system thus becomes gradually im-

¹² "But," says Dr. Rush, "are there no conditions of the human body, in which ardent spirits may be given? I answer, there are. First, when the body has been suddenly exhausted of its strength, and a disposition to faintness has been induced. Secondly, when the body has been exposed for a long time to wet weather, more especially, if it be combined with cold. They will *more certainly* have salutary effects, if the feet are at the same time bathed with them, or a half pint of them poured *into the shoes or boots*. These, I believe, are the only two cases, in which distilled spirits are useful or necessary to persons in health." *Medical Inq.* V. I. p. 351.

In confirmation of the preceding sentiment, we are told in the "Circular" already mentioned, "that the numerous crew of an armed ship, stranded in Plymouth Bay, in the revolutionary war, were generally frozen to death; and this in consequence, evidently, of the *free* use of spirit, taken to prevent it; but that those, who drank *none, but poured it into their boots*, were the few who survived."

¹³ After enumerating a number of mortal diseases, which are the usual consequences of habitual intoxication, Dr. Rush remarks, that these diseases "are more certainly induced, and terminate more speedily in death, when spirits are taken in such quantities, and at such times, as to produce frequent intoxication. But it may serve to remove an error, with which some intemperate people console themselves, to remark, that ardent spirits *often* bring on *fatal* diseases without producing drunkenness. I have known many persons destroyed by them, who were *never completely intoxicated*, during the whole course of their lives. The solitary instances of longevity, which are now and then met with in hard drinkers, no more disprove the deadly effects of ardent spirits, than the solitary instances of recoveries from apparent death by drowning, prove, that there is no danger to life from a human body being an hour or two under water."

pregnated with an alcoholic substance, which is *highly combustible*.

If this theory of the action of distilled spirits on the constitution is correct, it will perhaps assist in explaining the manner, by which intemperance predisposes the system to receive contagion and sickness. It will also enable us to explain, with considerable probability those remarkable facts of the *combustion of the human body*, in consequence of excessive indulgence in the use of ardent spirits.

It is an undoubted truth, that, in a number of instances, *the bodies of intemperate persons*, on approaching a lighted candle, or some other burning substance, have actually *taken fire*, and been *entirely consumed* in a short time. This combustion appears to be of a peculiar nature; for, in one instance, the flames of the burning body *adhered* to the hands of those, who attempted to extinguish them, and much resembled the flames of burning brandy;¹⁴ they did not always set fire to combustible substances, which were contiguous to them. In most cases the feet and hands remained unburnt. The residuum of this combustion appeared to consist of fat, fetid ashes, and an unctuous and penetrating soot.

The facts, which we have just mentioned, have occurred in different countries, but agree in their general attendant circumstances. They have been attested by men of distinguished learning,¹⁵ and communicated at the time to medical journals, or literary societies.

The theory, which we have just stated, and which supposes the human body capable of absorbing a certain proportion of the alcoholic ingredient of ardent spirits, is strongly confirmed by the case of an Italian Countess, who, although temperate, was accustomed to *bathe* herself in camphorated spirit of wine. The body of this lady accidentally took fire and was almost entirely consumed, leaving a residuum similar to that already described.

¹⁴ Le Cat's memoir on spontaneous combustion.

¹⁵ Among these are the names of Bianchini, Maffei, Rolli and Vieq-d'Azjr.

Dr. Haller relates the case of a notorious drunkard having been suddenly destroyed, in consequence of the vapor, discharged from his stomach by belching, accidentally taking fire by coming in contact with the flame of a candle. This case is cited by Dr. Rush.

It seems hardly necessary to remark, that this combustion of the human body *must* have arisen from *effects* produced on it by the use of *ardent spirits*; for, with the peculiar exception just mentioned, it has occurred in *intemperate persons only*; indeed it would be extremely difficult to cause a sound and healthy body to burn with flame.

Most surely the bare possibility of so dreadful a termination of this life would seem to be sufficient to alarm every intemperate man, and induce him to quench, with the pure waters of temperance, those flames, which he is perhaps *gradually* kindling.

Thus have we endeavoured to suggest a number of considerations, which ought to excite you to immediate and effectual exertions to check the evils of intemperance. To your collected wisdom are submitted the various *means*, by which the object is to be attained. Let not your progress, however, be like the wave, which roars, threatens, and breaks, involving perhaps a few individuals in destruction; but let it resemble the slow and resistless stream, moving with such force, that opposition itself shall despair of success.

