

Wm. J. Miller

# Highland Messenger.

LIFE IS ONLY TO BE VALUED AS IT IS USEFULLY EMPLOYED.

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## MISCELLANEOUS.

### The Sceptical young Officer.

BY THE LATE DR. J. H. HARRIS, OF N. YORK.

Every one has remarked the mixed, and often ill-assorted company which meets in a public packet or stage-coach. The conversation with all its variety, is commonly insipid, frequently disgusting and insufferable. There are exceptions. An opportunity now and then occurs of spending an hour in a manner not unworthy of rational beings; and the incidents of a stage-coach produce or promote salutary impressions.

A few years ago, one of these stages which ply between our two principal cities, was filled with a group which could never have been drawn together by mutual choice. In the company was a young man of social temper, affable manners, and considerable information. His accent was barely sufficient to show that the English was not his native tongue, and a very slight peculiarity in the pronunciation of the *th* ascertained him to be a Hollander. He had early entered into a military life: had borne both a Dutch and French commission; had seen real service, had travelled, was master of the English language; and evinced, by his deportment, that he was no stranger to the society of gentlemen. He had, however, in a very high degree, a fault too common among military men, and too absurd to find an advocate among men of sense; he swore profanely and incessantly.

While the horses were changing, a gentleman who sat on the same seat with him took him by the arm, and requested the favor of his company in a short walk. When they were so far retired as not to be overheard, the former observed, "Although I have not the honor of your acquaintance, I perceive, sir, that your habits and feelings are those of a gentleman, and that nothing can be more repugnant to your wishes than giving unnecessary pain to any of your company." He started, and replied, "most certainly, sir! I hope I have committed no offence of that sort."

"You will pardon me," replied the other for pointing out an instance in which you have not altogether avoided it."

"Sir," said he, "I shall be much your debtor for so friendly an act; for, upon my honor, I cannot conjecture in what I have transgressed."

"If you, sir," continued the former, "had a very dear friend to whom you were under unspeakable obligation, should you not be deeply wounded by any disrespect to him, or even by hearing his name introduced and used with a frequency of repetition and a levity of air incompatible with a regard due to his character?"

"Undoubtedly, and I should not permit it! but I know not that I am chargeable with an indecorum to any of your friends."

"Sir, my God is my best friend, to whom I am under infinite obligations. I think you must recollect that you have very frequently, since we have commenced our journey, taken his name in vain. This has given to me and to others of my company execrating pain."

"You do not imagine, sir," said he, continuing his discourse to the officer, "you do not imagine that a man who has been long addicted to stealing, feels the force of reasoning against theft as strongly as a man of tried honesty? If you hesitate, proceed a step further.—You do not imagine that an habitual thief feels as much abhorrence of his own trade and character, as a man who never committed an act of theft in his whole life. And you will not deny that the practice of any crime gradually weakens, and frequently destroys the sense of its turpitude. This is a strong fact, which, as a philosopher, you are bound to explain. To me it is clear as day, that his vice has debauched his intellect: for it is indispensable, that the considerations which once filled him with horror, produce now no more impression upon him than they would upon a horse. Why? Has the vice changed? No. The vice is as pernicious, and the considerations are as strong as ever. But his power of perceiving truth is diminished; and diminished by his vice; for, had he not fallen into it, the considerations would have remained; and (should he be saved from it,) they would resume their original force upon his mind. Permit yourself, for one moment to reflect how hard it is to persuade men of the virtues of others against whom they are prejudiced! You shall bring no proof of the virtues which the prejudice shall not resist or evade. Remove the prejudice and the proof appears incontrovertible. Why? Have the virtues changed? Has the proof been strengthened? No. But the power of perceiving truth is increased; or which is the same thing, the impediment to perceiving is taken away. If, then, there are bad passions among men; and if the object of Divine revelation is to control and rectify them; it follows, that a man to whom the revelation is proposed, will be blind to its evidence, in exact proportion to the perverting influence of those passions. And were the human mind free from corruption, there is no reason whatever to think that a moral argument would

be as conclusive as a mathematical argument is now; and that the principles of moral and religious science would not command an assent as instantaneous and peremptory as that which is commanded by mathematical axioms."

After a short pause, in which no reply was made by the officer, and the looks of the company revealed their sentiments, the clergyman proceeded.

"But what will you say, sir, should I endeavor to turn the tables upon you, by showing that the evidence of your physical science is not without its difficulties; and that objections can be urged against mathematical demonstration more puzzling and unanswerable than any objections against moral evidence?"

"I shall yield the cause; but I am sure that the condition is impossible."

"Let us try," said the other.

"I begin with a common case. The Newtonian system of the world is so perfectly settled that no scholar presumes to question it. Go, then, to a peasant who never heard of Newton nor Copernicus, nor the solar system, and tell him that the earth moves round its axis and round the sun. He will stare at you to see whether you are not jeering him; and when he sees you are in earnest he will laugh at you for a fool. Ply him, now, with your mathematical and astronomical reasoning. He will answer you that he believes his own eyesight that tells him the sun moves round the earth. And as for the earth's turning round upon her axis, he will say that "he has often hung a kettle over the kitchen fire at night and when he came back in the morning, it was hanging there still, but had the earth turned round, the kettle would have been turned over, and the mush spilled over the floor." You are amused with the peasant's simplicity, but you cannot convince him.—His objection is, in his own eyes, insurmountable; he will tell the affair to his neighbors as a good story, and they will agree that he fairly shut the philosopher's mouth. You may reply, that "the peasant was introduced into the middle of a matured science, and that not having learned its element, he was unsupplied with the principles of correct judgment." True; but your solution has overthrown yourself. A free-thinker, when he hears some great doctrine of Christianity, lets of a small objection and runs away laughing at the folly, or railing at the imposture of all who venture to defend a Divine revelation; he gathers his brother unbelievers, and they unite with him in wondering at the weakness or the impudence of Christians. He is in the very situation of the peasant. He bolts into the heart of a grand religious system; he has never adverted to its first principles, and then he complains that the evidence is bad. But the fault in neither case lies in the evidence; it lies in the ignorance or obstinacy of the objector. The peasant's ground is as firm as the infidel's. The proof of the Newtonian system is to the former as distant, subtle, and cloudy, as the proof of revelation can be to the latter; and the objection of the one is as good as the objection of the other. If the depravity of men had as much interest in persuading them that the earth is not globular, and does not move round the sun, as it has in persuading them that the Bible is not true, a mathematical demonstration would fail of converting them, although the demonstrator were an angel of God!

"But with respect to the other point, viz: that there are objections to mathematical evidence more puzzling and unanswerable, take the two following instances:

"It is mathematically demonstrated that space is infinitely divisible; that is, has an infinite number of parts; a line, then, of half an inch long, has an infinite number of parts. Who does not see the absurdity of this? Try the difficulty another way. It requires some portion of time to pass any portion of space. Then as your half inch has an infinite number of parts, it requires an infinite number of portions of time for a moving point to pass by the infinite number of parts; consequently it requires an eternity, or something like it, to move half an inch."

"But, sir," interposed the officer, "you do not deny the accuracy of the demonstration that space is infinitely divisible?"

"Not in the least, sir; I perceive no flaw in the chain of demonstration, and yet I perceive the result to be infinitely absurd."

Again: it is mathematically demonstrated that a straight line, called the asymptote of the hyperbola, may eternally approach the curve of the hyperbola, and yet can never meet it. Now, all demonstrations are built upon axioms, an axiom must always be plainer than a demonstration; and to my judgment is as plain, that if two lines continually approach, they shall meet, as that the whole is greater than its part. Here, therefore, I am fixed. I have a demonstration directly in the teeth of an axiom, and am equally incapable of denying either side of the contradiction.

"Sir," exclaimed the officer, clapping his hands together, "I own I am beat, completely beat. I have nothing more to say."

A silence of some minutes succeeded; when the young military traveller said to his theological friend, "I have studied all religions, and have not been able to satisfy myself."

"No, sir," answered he, "there is one religion which you have not yet studied."

"Pray, sir," cried the officer, roused and eager, "what is that?"

"The religion," replied the other, "of sal-

vation through the Redemption of the Son of God: the religion which will sweeten your pleasures, and soften your sorrows, which will give peace to your conscience, and joy to your heart; which will bear you up under the pressure of evils here, and shed the light of immortality on the gloom of the grave. This religion, I believe, sir, you have yet to study."

The officer put his hands upon his face; then languidly clasping them, let them fall down; forced a smile, and said with a sigh, "We must follow what we think best." His behaviour afterward was perfectly decorous. Nothing further is known of him.

Reader have you "studied the religion of salvation through the redemption of the Son of God?" If so, you must have been deeply convinced of the necessity of salvation—of the utter impossibility of obtaining it by your own exertions; or by those of any other creature—of its being only to be found through faith in Him whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour—and of its being not only fully adequate to the wants of the most needy of the human family, but also perfectly free to the most vile and worthless. Have you obtained an interest in this precious salvation? You are a debtor to sovereign grace. Flesh and blood have not imparted it to you, but the life-giving Spirit of God. Hold fast—grow in grace—endure to the end; for in due time you shall reap if you faint not.

But are you ignorant of this great salvation? do you neglect it? do you despise it? It is made known with great plainness in the Scriptures—be assured that its importance shall one day be felt; and that those who despise it shall be lightly esteemed—if uninterested therein, you perish eternally.

[From the Western-Carolina Temp. Advocate.]

**Liberty.**

There are perhaps few words of common use in the English language less understood as to their real meaning, or more vaguely interpreted by the mass of mankind, than the one at the head of this article.

Liberty, in its most indefinite and extended sense is known only in name; exists, so far as it concerns mortals here, only in the imagination; a subject of the poets song—a hobby for the funtional demagogue, or a kind of *ignis fatuus* for the fabulist and pseudo philanthropist, but no where is it to be found in reality. This will readily be conceded so far as it relates to liberty as synonymous with freedom, considered in opposition to necessity. That there are irreversible laws binding us down to certain courses, and restricting our operations, none will deny; and while these laws, whether they belong to our physical or moral natures, continue to act upon us, our liberty is restrained and we are not perfectly free. If we consider the word as implying freedom in opposition to slavery, it then becomes a question how far our natures under the irrevocable laws which govern them are susceptible of disenthralment? In all cases, then, when we use the word liberty, we use it in a comparative and restricted sense. Full and perfect liberty, belongs only to Omnipotence. Among men, there are no operations whatever; but such as are restrained by some law; and whether that law exists *ex necessitate rei*, or whether it exists in reference to certain circumstances growing out of, and dependent upon the different relations of society, it not only restrains, but classifies our operations, so that we have as principal divisions, *natural, civil and moral liberty.* Natural liberty consists simply in not being restrained in any way from doing whatever we have a will and power to do.

Civil liberty is well defined to consist "in not being restrained by any law but what conduces in a greater degree to the public welfare." To do what we will, is natural liberty. And to do only what is conducive to the public good, is civil liberty, which is indeed the only liberty that can reasonably be desired in civil society.—There is necessarily a relinquishment of a portion of our natural rights and liberties before a state of civil and social society can be formed. A man may doubtless wish to do as he pleases, but he must remember that every other man has the same natural rights and perhaps in this particular the same wish with himself, and for all to attempt to do as they please, would throw so much opposition, and so many hindrances in the way of each individual, that his happiness and liberty would be far less than if the whole community were under the dominion of just and equitable laws. The benefits to be derived from an organized state of civil society are incalculable. To enjoy these benefits, it becomes necessary for us to relinquish on our part, those natural rights which were required to be given up in order to form such a state of society in the first instance. Strictly speaking, therefore, no man has any right to do what is in any way incompatible with the good of the community in which he lives. An act is not civilly right merely because the civil law does not condemn it. All human laws from the source from whence they emanate, are necessarily imperfect; besides, they are mainly enacted upon a previous knowledge of what is good or ill for a community. The imperfections and weakness connected with, and characterizing all human institutions, when properly considered, show most conclusively, the necessity of having a code of laws purer, of higher origin, and more directly adapted to the varied exigencies of mankind than what earth can devise. And

these laws are to be found in that which prescribes, defines and regulates our *moral liberty*, which consists simply in doing what is compatible with the will of God. This, indeed, all the liberty that any man has. The will of God, is the foundation of all moral obligation. He wills that only which is compatible with the good of the whole; and the good of the community, as such, is the good of each individual who composes it.

We have been led to these remarks by the fact that one of the most common objections urged against the temperance reformation, is upon the ground that it is supposed to be unfavorable to our individual rights and privileges. It is amusing, not to say ridiculous, to hear the vaporing of some anti-temperance men about their being a "freeman," having a "right to do as they please," and their determination not to "give up their liberties." They become exceedingly patriotic when this subject is agitated, from the same cause that a certain Demetrius once did in Ephesus when St. Paul preached there: *If these men prevail, our craft is in danger!* From the same cause that influenced certain men once at Philippi who had a servant "possessed of the spirit of divination," and "brought her master much gain by sooth saying." When the apostle in the name of Christ, cast the devil out of her; her master saw that the hope of their gain was gone, and immediately cried the hue and cry in behalf of Caesar.—The truth is, that they wish to continue their practices of making, vending and drinking ardent spirits; and wish to do it under the sanction of public opinion; and any efforts which may be likely to turn public opinion against them will be met with all the energies they are capable of mastering.

Under a proper construction of moral liberty, (the only liberty man has) no one has a right to do what is in itself wrong, or what would in any wise tend to the injury of others; and as the friends of the temperance reformation have often been accused of intentions unfavorable to the rights and liberties of the country, it may not be amiss to take briefly, into consideration, the course of the maker and vender of ardent spirits, and see if the infringement on rights, be not on their part, instead of ours. And first.—The maker and vender, are favorable to the common use of spirits, and knowingly, take measures to secure their consumption. But, secondly, they know that the common use of spirits is most generally, if not invariably, followed by intemperance. Therefore, the maker and vender of ardent spirits, are, on the whole, favorable to intemperance, and knowingly, take measures to produce it!

Our first and second propositions will not be seriously denied; and if they be admitted, or can be proved true, the corollary will follow as a matter of course. We do not pretend to say that the maker and vender of ardent spirits are favorable to intemperance in the abstract, but we do say that they are favorable to the common use of spirits with a perfect knowledge of its effects, and when men choose means which they know lead to certain ends, and to be inseparably connected with those ends, they are considered as choosing the ends also. In this way are we to understand the doctrine of the Bible, that men choose death in the errors of their ways. They are not supposed to choose death abstractly considered, but they choose the means which lead to death, knowing that the means and end are inseparable. We hold, therefore, the maker and vender, as not only on the whole favorable to intemperance, and knowingly, taking measures to produce it, but as accessory to the multiplied crimes committed under its influence. To be an accessory to a crime, according to Walker, is one "that not being principal, contributes to it." It may, perhaps, however, be best explained by the language of the law, as laid down by some eminent jurists.

BLACKSTONE, if we recollect rightly, defines it somewhat in this way: "An accessory, is he who is not the chief actor in the offence, nor present at its performance, but is in some way connected therein, either before or after the act committed."

CHITTY, whose authority is little, if any, inferior to Blackstone, is more specific. He says, "An accessory before the fact, is he that being absent at the time of the actual perpetration of the felony, procures, counsels, commands, incites, or abets another to commit it."

And again he remarks, that "whoever procures a felony to be committed, though through the intervention of a third person, without any personal communication with the principal, is an accessory before the fact."

Sir MATTHEW HALLS, defines it substantially the same as do Blackstone and Chitty. Foster in his "Crown Law," says, that the best writers agree "that persons procuring or even consenting beforehand are accessories before the fact."

Now in the light of these plain law maxims, we ask what relation do the makers and vendors of ardent spirits sustain to the train of dire evils which are constantly flowing out from the common use of the article? Are they not in some way connected? Do they not "procure," "incite," and "abet" in these evils? Do they not readily furnish the means with a clear understanding of the use that is to be made of it, and with a perfect knowledge of its effects? Most assuredly they do; and if they are not on the whole favorable to intemperance, and accessory to the crimes produced by it, we are unable to draw legit-

mate inferences from the clearest and most unquestionable data. The infringement on "rights" and "liberties," is on their part. They make inroads on the peace, quietness and good order of society, and are constantly engaged in a course directly at war with the civil and moral interests of the country.

The various excuses offered by the makers and vendors of ardent spirits, for continuing their business we will notice hereafter; for the present, we drop the subject, but we are by no means done with it.

From "Chronicles of Life," by Mrs. C. B. Wilson.

**The Truant Husband.**

"The painful vigil may I never know  
That anxious watches o'er a wandering heart!"  
Mrs. Trant.

It was past midnight, and she sat leaning her pale cheek on her hand, counting the dull ticking of the French clock that stood on the marble chimney-piece, and ever and anon lifting her weary eye, to its dial to mark the lapse of another hour. It was past midnight, and yet he returned not! She arose, and taking up the lamp, whose pale rays alone illuminated the solitary chamber, proceeded with noiseless step to a small inner apartment. The curtains of his little bed were drawn aside, and the young mother gazed on her sleeping child! What a vivid contrast did that glowing cheek and smiling brow present, as he lay in rosy slumber, to the faded, yet beautiful face that hung over him in tears! "Will he resemble his father? was the thought that passed for a moment through her devoted heart, and a sigh was the only answer!"

'Tis his well known knock—and the steps of the drowsy porter echoed through the lofty hall, as with a murmur on his lips, he drew the massy bolts and admitted his threadless master. "Four o'clock, Willis, is it not!" and he sprang up the staircase—another moment he is in the chamber—in her arms!

No reproaches met the truant husband, none—save those she could not but spare him, in her heavy eye, and faded cheek—yet these spoke to his heart.

"Julia, I have been a wandering husband."

"But you are come now, Charles, and all is well."

And all was well, for, from that hour, Charles Danvers became an altered man. Had his wife met him with frowns and sullen tears, he had become a hardened libertine; but her affectionate caresses, the joy that danced in her sunken eye, the hectic flush that lit up her pallid cheek at his approach were arguments he could not withstand. Married in early life, while he felt all the ardor, but not the esteem of love; possessed of a splendid fortune, and having hitherto had the entire command of his own pleasures, Danvers fell into that common error, of newly married men—the dread of being controlled. In vain did his parents who beheld with sorrow the reproaches and misery he was heaping up for himself in after life, remonstrate; Charles Danvers turned a deaf ear to advice, and pursued, with companions every way unworthy of his society, the path of folly if not absolute guilt. The tavern, the club room, the race course, too often left his wife a solitary mourner, or a midnight watcher.

Thus the first three years of their wedded life had passed—to him in fevered and restless pleasure, to her in blighted hope or murmuring regret. But this night crowded the patient forbearance of the neglected Julia with its just reward, and gave the death blow to folly in the bosom of Danvers. Returning with disgust from the losses of the hazard table, her meekness and long-suffering touched him to the soul; the film fell from his eyes, and Vice, in her own hideous deformity, stood unmasked before him.

Ten years have passed since that solitary midnight, when the young matron bent in tears over her sleeping boy.—Behold her now! Still in the pride of womanhood, surrounded by their cherub faces, who are listening ere they go to rest to her sweet voice, as it pours forth to the accompaniment of her harp an evening song of joy and melody; while a manly form is bending over the music page to hide the tears of happiness and triumph that springs from a swelling bosom, as he contemplates the interesting group.—Youthful matrons! ye who watch over a wandering, perhaps erring heart—when a reproach trembles upon your lips towards a truant husband, imitate Julia Danvers, and remember, though hymen has chains, like the sword of Harmodius, they may be covered with flowers, that unkindness and irritability do but harden, if not wholly estrange the heart—while on the contrary patience and gentleness of manner (as water dropping on the flinty rock will in time wear into softness) seldom fail to reclaim to happiness and virtue the Truant Husband.

DEATH OF A DRUNKARD.—The Boston Journal gives an account of a man named Kelsey, who had been missing fourteen days, and was finally found with a jug of brandy by his head! He had been covered with snow.

MR. BUCKINGHAM.—Mr. Buckingham who resided for several years in the United States and was so popular as a lecturer, on his return to London, was cordially greeted at a public meeting of the different temperance societies of the metropolis to whom he gave an interesting account of the progress of temperance in the United States.