

REV. J. WESLEY'S OPINIONS.

If Rules have any meaning, Methodists are bound to help on the Temperance Society. The Preachers of this sect are much abroad; each one preaches eight or nine times in a week, and in from twelve to twenty different places in a quarter. The influence of their example is, therefore, extensive, and of course their responsibility great. Many of them have promised over and over, to adopt the rule of the Temperance Society. If, then, they are found daily or weekly breaking it, they *must* sink in public estimation, now that attention is universally turned to the subject. Those who confess that spirituous liquors are a deadly poison, and that snuff and tobacco are a needless self-indulgence, should of course totally abstain from them. There is a little book of 84 pages, which, when a candidate for the Methodist ministry is taken on trial is put into his hands, as containing sundry rules for the guidance of his life. The gift of this same book, after four years' trial, is the token of full admission into the ministry; it is presented by the Conference thus inscribed, "As long as you freely consent to, and earnestly endeavour to walk by these rules, we shall rejoice to acknowledge you as a fellow-labourer." The following are extracts:—

Page 14. "Have those in band left off snuff and drams? No. Many are still enslaved to one or the other. In order to redress this,—1st. Let no Preacher touch either, on any account. 2nd. Strongly dissuade our people from them. 3rd. Answer their pretences, particularly curing the colic." (a.) Again, in the same page, "Do not Sabbath-breaking, dram-drinking, &c. still prevail in several places? How may these evils be remedied? 1st. Let us preach expressly on each of these heads. Let the leaders closely examine and exhort every person to put away the accursed thing, &c. Page 20, "What reason can be assigned why so many of our Preachers contract nervous disorders? The chief reason, on Dr. Cado-gan's principles, is either indolence or intemperance. 2nd. Intemperance, (though not in the vulgar sense) they take more food than they did when they laboured more. If then

our Preachers would avoid nervous disorders, let them, 1st. Take as little meat, drink, and sleep, as nature will bear," &c. Page 27, "After preaching, all spirituous liquors are deadly poison." Page 28, "Are there any other advices which you would give the assistants? Several. Vigorously, but calmly, enforce the rules concerning needless ornaments, drams, snuff, and tobacco. Give no band ticket to any man or woman who does not promise to leave them off."

Page 34, "Do you use only that kind, and that degree of drink, which is best both for your body and soul? Do you drink water? Why not? Did you ever? Why did you leave it off? If not for health, when will you begin again? To-day? How often do you drink wine or ale? Every day? Do you want it?" Page 35, "Every person proposed (for the office of Preacher) may be asked, Do you know the rules of the society? Of the bands? Do you keep them? Do you take no snuff, tobacco, drams? The rule of the society referred to is, "*buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them*, unless in cases of extreme necessity." (b.)

The band rule, or rather "direction," is, (for mark, these words are not in the rules, but were published as part of directions to meet the state of the times in 1744,) "To taste no spirituous liquor, *no dram* of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician."

Preachers, people, behold your rules! If you will not bestir yourselves for the sake of Wesley, or of consistency, or of your own character, be persuaded to do so for the sake of those of your members who are every now and then lured away from you to your disgrace, to the injury of religion, and to the ruin of their precious souls. Confirm not the suspicion eagerly caught at, and widely spread already by your enemies, "that you love intoxicating drinks too well." If Mr. Wesley would take Dr. Cadogan's advice, surely you may safely take that of 1000 of the first physicians of the day, whose deliberate opinion is published, "that ardent spirits are injurious to persons in health *under any circumstances*."

The Methodist rules and minutes taken in connexion with some facts relative to spirit-drinking in the last century become exceedingly interesting. For ten years, from 1701 to 1710, the average annual consumption of spirits in Great Britain and Ireland was below two millions of gallons. There was a rapid increase, till, in 1742, the annual consumption of England and Wales was nearly twenty millions of gallons. London alone used twelve and a half millions of gallons. The country became alarmed, the magistrates of

Middlesex, (who in 1736 reported that there were 20,000 spirit shops, mostly cellars, in London,) took the lead. Petitions to Parliament were got up, some restrictive laws were passed, with which public opinion did not coincide. Riots ensued, the gaols were broken into, the military were called out; but amidst the bustle, the law became a dead letter. However, Wesley and his followers caught the flame which had been kindled several years before, and in May, 1743, were issued the general rules, (see above, b.) The Conference of 1744 spoke out plain enough, as quoted from the minutes (a); and on Christmas Day this same year appeared "Directions to Band Societies," (c) and is again dwelt on in the minutes, as quoted from page 27. It is thought that the observations about spirits, in the sermon on the use of money, were made in compliance with the minutes of Conference. If so, in what a noble manner did Wesley himself keep the rules. No nonsense about "can't get anything else" with him. One thing is very remarkable: the meaning of the word "dram" has been completely altered since the date of the Methodist rules. Now "dram" means a small glass of neat spirit; then it meant a small quantity of sugared and coloured spirit. It happened thus: when through their being the grand instrument of drunkenness, spirits became in a measure unfashionable, and an attempt was made to restrain the use of them by heavy taxation, drug-sellers to evade the law, began to distil spirits of various kinds, and to their shops persons (principally females) resorted for a dram, or two or three drams, (dram being an apothecary's measure) of this, that, or the other spirit. This explains the words "of any kind," and "unless prescribed by a physician," meaning in fact, "you are not to go to the druggists, unless the doctor sends you." Alas! for the wisdom of those who say that Wesley only prohibited "*clean spirit*." *Just the very reverse is the fact.*

Though at the risk of being long, one or two quotations may be made: "Preach expressly on this head," says Conference. "We may not," preaches Wesley in compliance, "sell anything which tends to impair health. Such is eminently all that liquid fire commonly called drams, or spirituous liquors. All who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners general. They murder his Majesty's subjects by wholesale; neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell like sheep, and what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who then would envy their large estates, or sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them. Blood, blood, is there. The foundation, the

floor, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood. Like as those whom thou hast destroyed, body and soul, thy memorial shall perish with thee." "Strongly dissuade our people from them," says Conference. "Whatever work of darkness," says the Preacher, "is speedily to be done, and that without any danger of being interrupted by fear, compassion, or remorse, they may in a few moments by one draught be as effectually qualified for it, as if they could swallow a legion of devils. Or, if that be all their concern, they may at a moderate expense destroy their own body as well as soul, and plunge through this liquid fire into that 'prepared for the devil and his angels.' Friend, stop! Why should you murder yourself inch by inch? Why should you burn yourself alive? O, spare your own body at least, if you have no pity for your soul!"

Perhaps we shall be anxious to know what good came from all this. The opposition to spirit-drinking, *of which opposition the labours of Wesley and his helpmates formed the principal part*, reduced the annual consumption of spirits, for the whole kingdom, to three millions of gallons, which was the average from 1750 to 1780, although, as we have seen already, the consumption of London alone, twelve months before they began to denounce them, was $12\frac{1}{2}$ millions of gallons of this "liquid fire."

Better days are again at hand; people are beginning to see their folly in spending money on any kind of intoxicating drink. Besides, if these drinks were ever so good, bringing drunkenness with them, they will be voted a nuisance by people in general; and by Methodists, it may be hoped, an especial curse



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