

## The Ten Dialogues on the Effects of Ardent Spirits (1831?)

### ~ Transcription ~

Dialogue III  
Pp. 9-12

James: I have been with Father to the prison; don't you wish you had gone with us?

Philip: I do not know; what did you see there?

James: We saw a great many men shut up in the rooms, the doors of which were three or four inches thick, and large nails or spikes driven through them, with flatted heads, and so close together that they almost touch each other. The doors were locked with a padlock so large that I could hardly have carried it. The windows had bars of iron in them crossing each other, and so near together that a child could scarcely creep through; and the rooms were so dark and gloomy that we could but just see how dirty and frightful they looked.

Philip: Why were the men shut up in those ugly rooms?

James: I do not know, father did not tell me. Wont you tell us, Pa?

Father: Some were put in the prison because they had stolen, some for having robbed others; one or two because they had committed murder; and some for other crimes.

Philip: Father, what made those people do such bad things?

Father: One half of them were led to their crimes by the habit of using strong drink. Drinking men are apt to become poor and lazy, and then they will steal and even rob, instead of laboring to earn their bread. They are easily made angry when drunk, and then they will curse, and swear, and even strike their fellow-creatures, and even kill them.

James: When the men are shut up in the prison for their crimes, how long have they to stay?

Father: That depends on the nature of their crime. Some remain three months, some six months, and some a year. Some are sent from this prison to another, called the States Prison, and are there shut up in a little dark cell where you could not see your hand, and are allowed nothing to eat or drink but bread and water. Some are forced to remain for ten years, some as long as they live; while others, instead of being sent to the States Prison, are hung by the neck till they are dead, and then the surgeons cut them to pieces.

Philip: Do they ever hang people for drinking rum?

Father: No, my son; but sometimes men are hung for the crimes they are led to commit by their having drank ardent spirits. I will relate to you a most dreadful instance of this kind. A

man who had a wife and a number of small children, not having been taught by his parents, when he was young, that he never ought to drink rum, got into the habit of using it a little. It increased upon him by degrees, until he was often absent at the tavern home later than usual, he tried to open the door of his house, but found it fastened. Believing that he was locked out by his wife, who had often remonstrated with him about his conduct, he, in a rage, suddenly formed the resolution, and set fire to the house, and burnt it to ashes, with his wife and children all in it. The man confessed his crime, and was hung.

#### Dialogue IV

Pp.: 12-14

Father: You remember, Thomas, when you were in the city with me, I took you to the Lunatic Asylum?

Thomas: Yes, father; I shall never forget what I saw and heard there. What a number of crazy persons, male and female, were confined in that building! And what miserable beings! What distracted looks! What wild and senseless talk! And how some of them raved and tore their hair and their clothes! It was enough to melt one's heart to hear them beg to be let out; some to get to their husbands and wives, and some to their children or to their parents; and to hear assurances that they would hurt no one if they were only released. Oh, how they entreated and cried to us to pity them!

Philip: What made those persons crazy, father?

Father: One third of the number confined have become deranged from the use of intoxicating liquors. Once those now miserable and disgusting men and women were happy and lovely children like my own sons and daughters. Some of them had been taught, even by their parents, to drink a little of ardent spirits, instead of being cautioned never to taste a drop of it. They had seen the poisonous drink used in their parents' families, and in the company which they frequented as though it were the chief good; and thus have grown up in the love of strong drink, instead of having their minds influenced to abhor it. The taste for ardent spirits is, in many instances, soon formed, and when once formed, is most difficult to be resisted. By falling into vicious, dissipated company, or meeting with disappointments, or adverse circumstances, they have become enslaved to strong drink, and taken it to such excess as to derange them.

James: Are all the persons who grow mad by drinking rum, confined in the Asylum?

Father: No, my son: there are thousands in the country, some of whom are running at large, half naked, through wet and cold, through woods and briars; and some are confined in their own or their parents' houses, and grief, the burden, the plague and shame of the families to which they belong.

#### Dialogue IX

Pg.: 25-27

Thomas: We have seen and heard much of the evils resulting from the use of rum and other ardent spirits, but we have not yet been informed how and where the persons who drink the poison get it.

Father: These pernicious liquors are kept for sale at the tavern, the groceries, and many of the stores.

Philip: I should not suppose anybody could be so wicked as to keep such poisonous stuff to sell. But where do the grocers and the merchants get it, Father?

Father: They are furnished from the stills.

Philip: What is a still, Father?

Father: It is a place where they make rum, gin, whiskey, and such vile stuff. You may remember the black-looking building at the south side of the village. That is a still.

Thomas: What is ardent spirits made of, Father?

Father: Rum is made of molasses; whiskey and gin are made of grain, such as rye and corn.

Philip: Molasses is very good and nourishing; why do they make it into rum? Rye and corn are fine to make bread and puddings, but what is the use of gin and whiskey?

Father: These are pertinent questions, Philip. I will answer them. The chief use of rum and all distilled liquors, is to make devils of human beings; and thus wicked man perverts the bounty of his Creator, by concerting into physical and moral poison, that which God has designed to sustain mans life, and make him comfortable. The reason why men do it is their love of money, which the Bible teaches us, is the root of all evil.

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