

# **TALKS ON TEMPERANCE**

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Talks on Temperance by Canon Farrar

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**CANON FARRAR**

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TEMPERANCE**



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BY  
REV. CANON FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.

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## BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

BY THE REV. CANON FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.

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Numbers xvi 48 : "And he stood between the dead and the living."

ON previous Sundays, my brethren, I have endeavored, at the request of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Evidence, to set before you "the universe as a manifestation of God's eternal power and godhead," by showing you, first, that its beauty was a seal of the handiwork of its Creator; and then, that neither in its illimitable vastness, nor in the steady uniformity of the laws which govern it, is there anything to shake, but rather very much to strengthen our faith in God. Such truths may be deeply practical, if we will make them so; if we will remember that this is the God whose eye is ever upon us; that "this God is our God forever and ever, and shall be our guide unto our death." And such truths have also a deep bearing on the subject of which I am bidden to speak to-day. For if there be one thing which would stand out clearly from such a contemplation of the awfulness of God, and yet the love which could send His own Son to die for us, it is the guilt involved in a willful depravation of His work, the dreadful consequences

which must follow—which, as a fact, are daily following—from the flagrant violation of His laws. Willful sin, a willful sacrifice of duty to self-indulgence; a willful choice of the lower and baser, instead of the higher and nobler, is disastrous in the individual; and pitiable indeed is the shipwreck which it causes to the hope and the happiness of life. But, in the case of a nation, still more disastrous is the loss, still more overwhelming the shipwreck. Take the history of any nation under the sun; watch its rise and watch its ruin, and see whether, in every instance, its ruin has not been the retribution of its guilt. You may not be able to see exactly why it was, but you are forced to see that so it was; and the secular historian will tell you, as emphatically as the theologian, that to every nation in its turn sin has meant—first, weakness, then decay, lastly, destruction. What ruined Judah? In its first stage, Idolatry; in its second stage, Pharisaism. What sapped the strength of Greece? Sensuality. What broke the iron arm of Rome? Again, Sensuality joined with Slavery. What ruined Spain? Avarice. What ruined Venice? Pride. What ruined the Papacy? Ambition. If ever England be ruined, what will be her ruin? Her national sin, whatever that national sin may be. And what is the national sin of England? Alas! there are many sins in England, but ask the unbiased opinion of those who know; ask the unsuspected testimony of the English judges; ask the exceptional experience of the English clergy; ask the unguarded admissions of the English press; and their unanimous answer would be,



I think, as would be the unanimous answer of every thoughtful man in this vast assembly—the national sin of England is drunkenness; the national curse of England is drink.

2. My brethren, it has been my duty more than once of late to speak of intemperance, and I am willing to bear the penalty. On this subject it is an imperative duty that the pulpit should not be always silent; but if I am not afraid to speak the truth, I do earnestly desire to speak truth only, and to speak that truth in love. Far from the sanctity of this place be vulgar exaggeration. This Abbey is sacred to Truth, sacred to Faith, sacred to Charity. Were I to say from this place one word that was unwarrantable, it would seem to me as though the immortal spirits of the great men whose memorials stand thick around us were frowning on me in disdain. But they would have still more cause to frown if I glossed over the truth with lies. To exaggerate is one thing; to be charged with exaggeration is quite another. There are, alas! aspects of this matter which it is impossible to exaggerate, and, though I shall touch only on facts admitted and undeniable, the worst facts are far too bad to be here spoken of at all. And if there be any here who are concerned in the maintenance of a trade from which flow such dangerous consequences, while I ask them to think over their responsibility, and of that strict and solemn account which they must one day give before the judgment-seat of Christ, they may rest assured that I speak of a system, not of individuals, and that, as I never have, so neither now will I, say one

word which is meant to reflect painfully on them. But, knowing drunkenness to be a ruinous vice, and seeing that the results which flow from it are of the darkest and most appalling character, I therefore desire to arrest—more and more to arrest—so far as I can, the attention of the people of England to this crying and wide-wasting evil. To the intemperate I am not speaking, though from my very soul I pity them; nor to abstainers, to whom I can say nothing new; but I do want every English man and woman in this Abbey, and every English-speaking man and woman whom, in any form, or by any means, these words can reach, to face the stern facts which I shall touch upon; to ask themselves how far they mean to be entangled in responsibility for them; and how long they will, and why they will, look on at such facts unmoved. How weak, alas! are poor human words; how timid poor human hearts! But, oh! if that Great Angel of the Apocalypse could speak, and if his voice were in the thunder's mouth, he could not speak too loud to warn England of the sin and misery which are in the midst of her—to urge her to shake out of her bosom this burning coal of fire.

3. "Woe," says Jeremiah, "woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower." The allusions to drunkenness in Scripture and in classical literature are not unfrequent. Yet drunkenness was not the prevalent sin of ancient times; and an ancient Spartan, an ancient Roman, or an ancient Hebrew would have stared with contemptuous disgust at the sights which in Christian England are familiar as a jest. It was not

that they were less prone to sin, but they were less petted with temptation. Southern and Eastern nations have never been so drunken as Northern; and ancient nations were ignorant of that deadly spirit [derived from the fermentation of saccharine matters which, as a distinct compound, was first discovered about 1300] which has wrought a havoc so frightful among us. The simple wines of antiquity were incomparably less deadly than the stupefying and ardent beverages on which £150,000,000 are yearly spent in this suffering land. The wines of antiquity were more like syrups; many of them were not intoxicant; many more intoxicant in but a small degree, and all of them, as a rule, only taken when largely diluted with water. The sale of these comparatively harmless vinous fluids did not bear the remotest resemblance to the drink trade among us, nor did the same ghastly retinue of evils follow in its train. They contained, even when undiluted, but four or five per cent. of alcohol, whereas some of our common wines contain seventeen per cent., and the maddening intoxicants of Scotch and English cities contain the horrible amount of fifty-four per cent. of alcohol. Take but one illustration of the difference of ancient and modern days. Our blessed Lord, when He lived on earth, traversed Palestine from end to end. He saw many a sinner and many a sufferer; He saw the lepers, and healed them; He saw weeping penitent women, and restored them to honor and holiness again; there is not the slightest trace that He ever once witnessed that spectacle of miserable degradation,