

THE
MISER,
AND
THE PRODIGAL,
A MORAL TALE.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED,
THE
DRUNKARD'S SOLILOQUY.

By ANDREW AITKEN.

By Folly led, we oft ourselves deceive,
And catch at shadows, and the substance leave.

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MISER,
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A Moral Tale.

Money is first loved as a means of procuring the comforts of life; and people end in loving it for its own sake, and in depriving themselves, in order to preserve it, of these very enjoyments which alone can make it desirable.

To study man, to trace his aims and views,
Is labour worthy of the rural Muse.
To aid the right, discountenance the wrong,
And point out Virtue's path to old and young—
Teach Wisdom's votaries in her ways to run,
And warn the simple Folly's paths to shun.
To teach and please, be this my constant aim.
The following tale does your attention claim.

'Mang men on earth is many a different state,
Some rich, some poor, some little, and some great.
Life's short and shifting scene we struggle through,
Each with some favourite pursuit in his view.
By Folly led, we oft ourselves deceive,
And catch at shadows, and the substance leave.
Some hoard up wealth, yet never are content,
And in the midst of plenty live in want.
What folly this! from Fortune wealth to court,
And leave't to those who will not thank them for't;
They'll say, "he pinch'd himsel', we'll tak it now,"
Then roar an' curse, an' eat, an' drink an' spew.

But to our tale, which shall the truth declare.
 There was a man liv'd near the town o' Ayr
 Whase way o' life we will attempt to show,
 That all wha read, may learn an' wiser grow.

Aye frae his youth he was inclin'd to care—
 While ithers spent, his money he would spare—
 Whan young chaps fairings caft, an' dress'd fu' trig,
 He kept his bawbees in a *pinor-pig* ; *
 At school, he aften sell't his bread an' cheese ;
 An' gather'd prins, or ought wad bring bawbees.
 His father dec't, nae hame ava had he,
 To his ain fen he gaed an' took a fee.

Would foolish mortals fallow Reason's light,
 An' whan they're weel, try to continue right,
 Then might they aften frae their troubling cease,
 An' let themsel's an' ithers live in peace.
 Now was the time he hit the happy mark,
 He wrought an' gat his wages for his wark,
 His siller lent, wi' pleasure he would tell,
 It gain'd as fast as he could do himsel'.
 He gather'd, view'd, an' sav'd, how happy now, †
 An' every day he liv'd he richer grew.
 At length, resolv'd to change his way o' life,
 He made a bauld attempt an' took a wife—
 A wife, of earthly gifts, by Wisdom's plan
 Design'd the best, a helpmate unto man,
 Prov'd not a blessing to a man like this,
 But seal'd her own unhappiness an' his.
 She wish'd to live a moderate, frugal mean,
 And, by industry, to gang snod an' clean ;

* *Pinor-pig*, a small earthen jar, with a slit in one of its sides, near the top, large enough to admit pieces of money ; but from which they are not easily extracted without breaking the vessel.

† Avarice is an uniform and tractable vice ; other intellectual distempers are different in different constitutions of mind. That which soothes the pride of one, will offend the pride of another ; but to the favour of the covetous bring money, and nothing is denied.

He wish'd to save, even every sma' expense,
 Tho' toom their wames, an' bare their backs at once.
 Now he had siller lent to different han's,
 On houses, and on property in lan's;
 At length, some partial loss did him alarm,
 He gather'd up his stoek, an' east a farm.

An' now his paying, an' his grief began,
 Which kept him always an unhappy man:
 A house to bigg, cost him a great expense—
 His parks to lime, an' drain, an' plough, an' fence.
 A horse, an' eart, an' graith he had to buy,
 A plough an' harrows, sheep, an' swine, an' kye.
 'Mang ither events, too, his only son
 Was gotten hame, an' by him ehristen'd John.
 Thus howdies, banquets, something every day,
 At ilka corner gar'd him draw an' pay.
 Sad was his ease, for mony a body doubtet
 He wad ha'e dee't, or gane stark mad about it.
 His purse gaed toom! Ah! desperate, dark despair,
 It didna do, he had to barrow mair.

By various means, howe'er, the farm was stoeket,
 An' to the saving an' the wark he yoeket,
 By day he plan'd, an' wrought; by night he dream'd
 O' schemes to get his farm frae debt redeem'd:
 This end obtain'd, he aye grew worse an' worse,
 An' a' he got was stappit in the purse.
 His ain guid corn an' meal he dear did sell,
 An' east auld mould thing for to ser' themsel';
 This damag'd stuff he got about the shore,
 They ate less o't, this was a mighty fore! *
 An' whey for kitchin, which he reekon'd fine—

* Avarice excludes all natural and social affections from the human breast. It is incompatible with elevation of mind; with benevolence, generosity, humanity, confidence, and candour—with love and true friendship, with paternal tenderness and filial affection. What Virtue then remains for the miser? What happiness can a man without moral goodness enjoy?

Even this was grudg'd, because it fed the swine,
 An' they brought siller!—precious metal!—yes,
 His food, drink, elaise, his hope, his only bliss.

By this time he was wearin' up in years,
 An' worn wi' wark, an' grief, an' killin' cares.
 His wife she dee't, thro' grief an' sair distress,
 Which event did complete his wretchedness;
 For she had urg'd him aft, by counsel guid,
 To tak' an' gie the lave baith elaise an' food.—
 Left till himsel', on wealth he aye grew keener,
 An' aye the mair he got, he liv'd the meaner—
 He tookna' meat, an' wadna wash his elaise,
 But gaed in rags, o'ergane wi' dirt an' flaes—
 His bed-elaise dune, he wadna purchase mae,
 But sleepit mony a night 'mang rags an' strae.

As he turn'd frail, grown up to manhood, Jock
 Sunc fand he wasna used like ither fo'k:
 While ither youths were fed an' clad at will,
 He was ill-meatet, poorer rigget still.
 Meanwhile the auld man fail'd—Jock out afield
 Began to manage, grew a squatterin' ehie!
 Folk saw his spirit, but, at hame ye ken
 The auld man didna gi'e him much to spen'—
 He steal'd at hame, when he advantage had,
 An' barrow'd sums, an' rov'd awa' like mad.
 These things, wi' grief, the auld man heard and saw,
 Could not prevent them, had to gie up a':
 Unheal he grew, could tak nae meat, turn'd faint,
 Wad tak nae eordials, dee't wi' perfect want—*
 And left his precious gear to ither folk—
 It ne'er was his, nor wad it bide wi' Jock.

* Seneca says, "Many things are wanting to the indigent, the miser wants every thing." Quevedo tells us "that a miser is a man who knows where a treasure is hidden." It is possible, after all, that a miser, as well as a devotee, may *enjoy* his privations; but to want fuel in winter, and food when hungry, are evils nevertheless. The miser would doubtless prefer to be well lodged, well clothed, and well fed, if it cost him nothing.

Jock, master now, began to act wi' spirit
 Providin' things to get his father burriet.
 "He's left me plenty," Jock was heard to say,
 "He pinch'd me lang, we'll hae ae jolly day."
 The day was cauld, the liquor guid an' strong,
 An' freely it was drunk by auld an' young.
 The glass gaed roun' till some began to nod,
 They gat him out at length, an' took the road—
 Fast they gaed on, an' dash'd thro' thick an' thin,
 While some were comin' singin' far ahin.
 "He," cried auld men, wi' dirt bedaubed claise,
 "Ne'er gaed to town sae merry a' his days,"
 Some fell an' spew'd, the stoutest onward drave,
 An' gat the auld man happit in his grave.
 Frae clags and claims, debts and mortgages clear—
 A farm weel worth a hunder pounds a year;
 Besides the stock o' gear, which wasna sma',
 And siller likewise—Jock was laird o' a'.
 His father's guid auld warks he did despise,*
 (Folk wha are rich soon fancy they are wise,)
 He bigget houses, muckle, stark, an' fine—
 Heigh garden dykes, and fruit trees planted syne:
 Cast a new gig, kept bluid-mares—races ran;
 Rade bruises too, an' mighty wagers wan.
 Had hounds, an' pointer-dogs, o' various breeds—
 Catch'd maukins, pertricks shot—did manly deeds.
 Horse couper turn'd, lee't, bred an' unco steer,
 An' cheated simple bodies far an' near.
 Now he was seldom seen at hame ava'—
 Wad ye him seek? then at the yill-house ca'.
 He learn'd to drink, an' stay'd without regard,
 'Mang dyvour ehiels, wha frais'd, an' ca'd him laird;
 They drank, he pay't; nought pleas'd sae muckle now,
 As drinking hard, an' filling ithers fu'.
 His cash gaed dunc—sell't ae park, syne anither,

* "We think our fathers fools. so wise we grow,
 Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so."

Till park, an' park, he sell't it a' thegither.
 'Mang mony a plan, at length he hit the nailer—
 Gaed to the town, an' turn'd a spirit-dealer:
 Herc, for some time, he did enjoy his wish,
 He sell'd, an' drank himsel', like ony fish;
 But scarce o' cash again, he forg'd a bill,
 An' smuggl'd whisky, and did muckle ill.
 For Justice fear'd, that harden'd vile offender
 Turn'd bankrupt, fled, an' gaed aboard the Tender.

Reader, remind my tale, with deep concern:
 From such examples useful wisdom learn.*
 While misers starve amidst their stores of wealth,
 And drunkards waste their riches and their health,
 Strive thou, with prudence, both extremes to shun—
 Distant from both, a happy medium run.
 What Heaven bestows, with thankfulness receive,
 With Reason take, and taste, enjoy, and live.

* My design in writing and publishing the foregoing tale, is not merely to raise a laugh at the follies and sufferings of erring men, but to delineate the evil of covetousness on the one hand, and prodigality on the other; and warn people from running into extremes of every kind: for it is only in the way of receiving with thankfulness, and using in moderation, the gifts of Providence, that we can be useful and happy through life, and terminate our days with honour and safety.

THE DRUNKARD'S SOLILOQUY,

IN IMITATION OF HAMLET'S.

To drink, or not to drink? that is the question—
 Whether 'tis better still to rove about
 From inn to inn, mad with the fumes of whisky,
 Or make a vow against the use of spirits,
 And save our health and money? Grow sober—
 wealthy.—

No more:—and by this change to say we end
 The head-ache, heat-burn, and a thousand ills,
 That drunkards suffer: 'tis a situation
 Devoutly to be wish'd.—To eat—to drink—
 To drink? perchance get drunk! Ay, there's the road:
 When met in town with all our boon companions,
 Must give us pause.—There is the reason
 That makes good-natur'd men drink all their days;
 For who would bear the ills of cold and want,
 The spurns of vintner's, when his money's gone,
 The duns of creditors, the beadle's chace,
 The fears of jail, and all the rude insults
 Which wretched drunkards from the rabble take,
 When he himself might live at ease and comfort
 In his own dwelling? Who would whisky swill,
 And groan and spew about an alehouse door,
 But that the dread of conquering rooted habit
 (That unsubdued tyrant, from whose grasp
 Few people e'er escape) puzzles the will,
 And bids us rather call the other gill,
 Than grope the way home to our cheerless dwellings.
 Thus craving thirst makes drinkers of us still,
 And many a well-form'd scheme and resolution
 Is broken up 'mid riot and intemperance,
 And foolish men, who once had pith and money,
 With this regard, refuse to be reclaim'd,
 And live in abject poverty.