

Cheap Repository.

THE  
TWO SHOEMAKERS,

PART VI.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

*On the Duty of carrying Religion into our Amusements.*



SOLD BY HOWARD AND EVANS,

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NEW ENGLAND  
INDIAN TRADE



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THE  
TWO SHOEMAKERS, &c.

PART VI.

THE next evening Will Simpson being got first to his work, Mr. Stock found him singing very cheerfully over his last. His master's entrance did not prevent his finishing his song, which concluded with these words:—

“ Since life is no more than a passage at best,

“ Let us strew the way over with flowers.”

When Will had concluded his song, he turned to Mr. Stock, and said, “ I thank you, master, for first putting it into my head how wicked it is to sing prophane and indecent songs, I ne-

ver sing any now which have any wicked words in them."

*Stock.* I am glad to hear it. So far you do well. But there are other things as bad as wicked words; nay, worse perhaps, though they do not so much shock the ear of decency.

*Will.* What is that, master? What *can* be so bad as wicked words?

*Stock.* Wicked *thoughts*, Will. Which thoughts, when they are covered over with smooth words, and dressed out in pleasing rhymes, so as not to shock modest young people by the sound, do more harm to their principles than those songs of which the words are so gross and disgusting, that no person of modest decency can for a moment listen to them.

*Will.* Well, master, I am sure that was a very pretty song I was singing when you came in, and a song which very sober good people sing.

*Stock.* Do they? Then I will be bold to say that singing such songs is no part of their goodness. I heard indeed but two lines of it, but they were so heathenish that I desire to hear no more.

*Will.* Now you are really too hard. What harm could there be in it? There was not one indecent word.

*Stock.* I own, indeed, that indecent words are particularly offensive. But, as I said before, though immodest expressions offend the ear more, they do not corrupt the heart, perhaps, much more than songs of which the words are decent, and the principle vicious. In the latter case, because there is nothing that shocks his ear, a man listens till the sentiment has so corrupted his heart, that his ear grows hardened too, and by long custom he loses all sense of the danger of prophane diversions; and, I must say I have often heard young women of character sing songs in company which I should be ashamed to read by myself. But come, as we work let us talk over this business a little; and first let us stick to this sober song of your's, that you boast so much about (*repeats*)

“ Since life is no more than a passage at best,

“ Let us strew the way over with flowers.”

Now what do you learn by this?

*Will.* Why, master, I don't pretend to learn much by it:—but 'tis a pretty tune and pretty words.

*Stock.* But what do those pretty words mean?

*Will.* That we must make ourselves merry, because life is short.

*Stock.* Will! of what religion are you?

*Will.* You are always asking one such odd questions, master; why a Christian to be sure.

*Stock.* If I often ask you, or others, this question, it is only because I like to know what grounds I am to go upon when I am talking with you or them. I conceive that there are in this country two sorts of people, Christians, and no Christians. Now, if people profess to be of this first description, I expect one kind of notions, opinions, and behaviour from them: if they say they are of the latter, then I look for another set of notions and actions from them. I compel no man to think with me. I take every man at his word. I only expect him to think and believe according to the character he takes upon himself, and to act on the principles of that character which he professes to maintain.

*Will.* That's fair enough; I can't say but it is to take a man at his own word, and his own grounds.

*Stock.* Well then, Of whom does the scripture speak when it says, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die?"

*Will.* Why of heathens, to be sure, not Christians.

*Stock.* And of whom, when it says, "Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered?"

*Will.* O! that is Solomon's worldly fool.

*Stock.* You disapprove of both then?

*Will.* To be sure I do. I should not be a Christian if I did not.

*Stock.* And yet, though a Christian, you are admiring the very same thought in the song you were singing. How do you reconcile this?

*Will.* O, there is no comparison between them. These several texts are designed to describe loose wicked heathens. Now I learn texts as part of my religion. But religion you know has nothing to do with a song. I sing a song for my pleasure.

*Stock.* In our last night's talk, Will, I endeavoured to prove to you that religion was to be brought into our *business*. I wish now to let you see that it is to be brought into our *pleasure* also. And that he who is really a Christian, must be a Christian in his very diversions.

*Will.* Now you are too strict again, master, as you last night declared, that in our business you would not have us always praying, so I hope that in our pleasure you would not have us al-

ways psalm-singing. I hope you would not have all one's singing to be about good things.

*Stock.* Not so, Will; but I would not have any part either of our business or our pleasure to be about evil things. It is one thing to be singing *about* religion, it is another thing to be singing *against* it. St. Peter, I fancy, would not much have approved your favourite song. He, at least, seemed to have another view of the matter, when he said, "The end of all things is at hand." Now this text teaches much the same awful truth with the first line of your song. But let us see to what different purposes the apostle and the poet turn the very same thought. Your song says, because life is short, let us make it merry. Let us divert ourselves so much on the road that we may forget the end. Now what says the apostle, "Because the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer."

*Will.* Why, master, I like to be sober too, and have left off drinking. But still I never thought that we were obliged to carry texts out of the Bible to try the soundness of a song; and to enable us to judge if we might be both merry and wise in singing it.



*Stock.* Providence has not so stinted our enjoyments, Will, but he has left us many subjects of harmless merriment; but, for my own part, I am never certain that any one is quite harmless till I have tried it by this rule that you seem to think so strict. There is another favourite catch which I heard you and some of the workmen humming yesterday.

*Will.* I will prove to you that there is not a word of harm in *that*; pray listen now. (Sings)

“ Which is the best day to drink—Sunday,  
 “ Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday,  
 “ Friday, Saturday?”

*Stock.* Now, Will, do you really find your unwillingness to drink is so great, that you stand in need of all these incentives to provoke you to it? Do you not find temptation strong enough, without exciting your inclinations, and whetting your appetites in this manner? Can any thing be more unchristian, than to persuade youth by pleasant words, set to the most alluring music, that the pleasures of drinking are so great, that every day in the week, naming them all, successively, by way of fixing and enlarging the idea, is equally fit, equally proper, and equally delightful, for what?—for the low and sensual purpose of getting drunk. Tell me, Will, are

our so *very* averse to pleasure? Are you naturally so cold and dead to all passion and temptation, that you really find it necessary to inflame your imagination, and disorder your senses, in order to excite a quicker relish for the pleasures of sin?

*Will.* All this is true enough, indeed, but I never saw it in this light before.

*Stock.* As I passed by the Greyhound last night, in the way to my evening's walk in the fields, I caught this one verse of a song which the club were singing.

“ Bring the flask, the music bring,  
 “ Joy shall quickly find us;  
 “ Drink, and dance, and laugh, and sing,  
 “ And cast dull care behind us.”

When I got into the fields, I could not forbear comparing this song with the second lesson last Sunday evening at church; these were the words:—“ Take heed least at any time your heart be overcharged with drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come upon all them that are on the face of the earth.”

*Will.* Why, to be sure, if the second lesson was right, the song must be wrong.

*Stock.* I ran over in my mind also a comparison between such songs as begin with

“ Drink and drive care away,”

with these injunctions of holy writ, “ Watch and pray therefore that you enter not into temptation;” and again, “ Watch and pray that you may escape all these things.” I say I compared this with the song I allude to:—

“ Drink and drive care away,

“ Drink and be merry;

“ You’ll ne’er go the faster

“ To the Stygian ferry.”

I compared this with that awful admonition of Scripture how to pass the time, “ Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

*Will.* I am afraid, then master, you would not much approve of what I used to think a very pretty song, which begins with

“ A plague on those musty old lubbers,

“ Who teach us to fast and to think.”

*Stock.* Will, what would you think of any one who should sit down and write a book or a song to abuse the clergy?

*Will.* Why I should think he was a very wicked fellow, and I hope no one would look into such a book, or sing such a song.

*Stock.* And yet it must certainly be the clergy who are scoffed at in that verse, it being their professed business to teach us to *think* and be serious.

*Will.* Aye, master, and now you have opened my eyes, I think I can make some of those comparisons myself between the spirit of Bible and the spirit of these songs,

“Bring the flask, the goblet bring,”  
won't stand very well in company with the threat of the prophet: “Woe unto them that rise up early, that they may mingle strong drink.”

*Stock.* Aye, Will; and these thoughtless people who live up to their singing, seem to be the very people described in another place as glorying in their intemperance, and acting what their songs describe:—“They look at the wine and say it is red, it moveth itself aright in the cup.”

*Will.* I do hope I shall for the future not only become more careful what songs I sing myself, but also not to keep company with those who sing nothing else but what, in my sober judgment, I now see to be wrong.

*Stock.* As we shall have no *body* in the world to come, it is a pity not only to make our pleasures here consist entirely in the delights of animal life, but to make our very songs consist in extolling and exalting those delights which are unworthy of the man as well as of the Christian. If, through temptation or weakness, we fall into errors, let us not establish and confirm them by picking up all the songs and scraps of verses which excuse, justify, and commend sin. *That time is short*, is a reason given by the song-mongers why we should give into greater indulgences. *That time is short*, is a reason given by the apostle why we should enjoy our dearest comforts as if we enjoyed them not.

Now, Will, I hope you will see the importance of so managing, that our diversions (for diversions of some kind we all require,) may be as carefully chosen as our other employments. For to make them such as shall effectually drive out of our minds all that the Bible or the Minister have been putting into them, seems to me as imprudent as it is unchristian. But this is not all. Such sentiments as these songs contain, set off by the prettiest music, heightened by liquor, and all the noise and spirit of what is called jovial company, all this, I say, not only puts every

thing that is right out of the mind, but puts every thing that is wrong into it. Such songs, therefore, as tend to promote levity, thoughtlessness, loose imaginations, false views of life, forgetfulness of death, contempt of whatever is serious, and neglect of whatever is sober, whether they be love songs, or drinking songs, will not, cannot be sung by any man or any woman who makes a serious profession of Christianity.\*

\* It is with regret I have lately observed, that the fashionable author and singer of songs, more loose, profane and corrupt, than any of those here noticed, not only received a prize as the reward of his important services, but received also the public acknowledgments of an illustrious society for having contributed to the happiness of their country.

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