4 “These are they who were not defiled with women: for they  
are virgins.”

How are these words to be understood?  
 They are commonly explained as *figurative*. “They  
were untainted by the corrupt influences of that evil  
day, and especially are they free from the *idolatries*,  
that will be one of its most grievous marks. I do not  
mean idolatry in a vague or virtual sense, as we are  
warned against covetousness, which is such morally;  
but *positive, literal idolatry*” (Kelly).  
 (1) Do “women,” then, ever mean idols? Why  
must “women” here be taken in a bad sense? Why  
should we not translate it—“Were not defiled with  
*wives”?* No scholar will deny that this is a very  
common sense. “They all brought us on our way  
with *wives* (women) and children” (Acts xxi. 5; i. 14).  
Where the law speaks of defilement, does it take women  
in a bad sense? Lev. xv.  
 “This passage,” says Barnes, “cannot be adduced in  
favour of celibacy . . . for the thing that is specified  
is, that they were not ‘*defiled* with women,’ and a  
lawful connection of the sexes, such as marriage, is  
*not* defilement.” Certainly not, morally. Heb. xiii.  
4, which he cites, proves that clearly: but he rests on  
but *half* the inspired statement here made.  
 If we read in any book—“These were never defiled  
with *wine* or *strong drink*”—the words might be susceptible of two senses; according as we supposed them to  
be written by a Christian in general, or by a teetotaller.  
In the one case we should understand that they had  
never been intoxicated; in the other, that the persons  
named had never tasted either wine or spirits. But  
all our doubt would be in an instant put to flight,  
if following on the words above given, we read—“For  
they are total abstainers.” This would limit the words  
to the teetotal sense. Thus in the sacred text before