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THE PROGRESS OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE

- MARCH 29. - PROV. 23:29-35 -

Golden Text: – "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

WE shall not attempt a special analysis of this lesson, believing that all of our readers are thoroughly competent to do this, each for himself. We do, however, with pleasure call attention to the fact that total abstinence has been making great progress recently, especially in our own land. Our readers are well aware that we do not admit that there is a total abstinence Gospel and that it is the duty of the Lord's people to be preaching it. On the contrary, while we have much sympathy with reforms along the lines of temperance and every other direction, we recognize the fact that only one Gospel commission has been given to the Lord's followers, namely, Go thou and preach the Gospel, good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. We are not turning aside from this divine commission to teach temperance, total abstinence, but we do take the passing opportunity of registering our sympathy with the cause, and the joy it would give us to see this great evil of intemperance put down.

So surely as the Lord's people pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," they are hoping the time will come when the liquor evil in its various multiplied forms will be thoroughly overthrown and banished as a part of the devil's instrumentality of evil whereby countless [R4156 : page 91] millions have been caused to mourn and helped into further sin and degradation. Whoever looks forward to the coming Kingdom and its work of blessing mankind, in the manner suggested and other ways, must also at heart be very much in sympathy with every endeavor on the part of the poor world to

help itself and to get free from this terrible bondage. And such in turn in their own hearts and lives must feel like putting on restraints which would not only keep their bodies suitable temples of the holy Spirit but keep them ready, meet for the Master's use, and at their very highest degree of usefulness for his service. It would be in vain surely for any of this class to pray for God's Kingdom to come and not strive to have that Kingdom operative in themselves and illustrated in their own daily lives to the best of their ability.

From letters received we perceive that the question of license or no license is being very widely discussed and made an issue. Our readers know that in general we advise that as followers of the Lamb it would be to the advantage of the Lord's dear people to avoid complications with political questions and that our privileges as citizens of this country of casting our votes at the polls be generally ignored as being to our disadvantage spiritually. Furthermore we have suggested that voting brings a measure of responsibility for the upholding of the party with which we have affiliated and voted and a partial responsibility for its right or wrong use of power, and might imply a certain responsibility to bear arms, etc. Our advice, therefore, has been that we who are seeking the heavenly city, the heavenly country, and who are praying, "Thy Kingdom come," should wait for that Kingdom, and not meddle with earthly affairs, politics, voting, etc. Now the question arises, Would it be right or wrong for us to vote on the question of local option? Our thought, dear friends, is that it would be perfectly right for us to express our sentiments on this subject at the polls. It is a special question and the law invites every citizen to express his preferences and we do well to express ourselves, not in a partizan manner, not in denunciation of those who think differently, but quietly, meekly, to say by our vote at the polls that we are quite willing to forego our own personal liberties in connection with spirituous liquors for the good which would thereby be accomplished for the masses. And if at the same

election a choice were being made for a School Board, we see no objection that could reasonably be urged to an expression of one's preferences there that the best men might be chosen to supervise the school work. But we suggest to all that there is danger of being absorbed by the worldly and political spirit and of having our time and attention taken from other important matters. We would advise that politics in general be left to the children of this world who believe nothing and care nothing for our Kingdom for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

It may not be amiss to give a few quotations from –

ADVOCATES OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, answering a question on this subject, replied, "The best temperance lecture I have delivered lately is my offer of ten per cent. premium on their wages to all the employees of my Scottish estates who will abstain from intoxicating liquors."

The Brotherhood of Railroad Engineers, we are informed, "will do all they can to help a man to overcome the evil habit. They will bear with him, encourage him, but if he continue to drink they must for the safety of the public report him to the authorities and have him discharged." So says one of them.

A military man, an inmate of an institution for reformation of those addicted to the liquor habit, when questioned respecting the necessity for his being there, told that he had tried hard to stop the periodical "bouts," but that he might as well have tried to stop an express train. He said that the helpers at the institution had succeeded in stopping his craving so that he refused a glass of whiskey after the fourth day. The minister who was questioning him said, "But were you not on your honor not to drink it?" "True," replied the major, "but if the craving had come I might have been on fifty honors and they would not have mattered a straw."

A business man at the same institute said, "I came here because I was always telling myself that I could give up drinking just when I wanted to; but one day I was startled to find how my periods of sobriety had shortened from three months to three weeks."

A BUSINESS FIRM RUINED

"A number of years ago a certain firm of four men in Boston were rated as 'A1.' They were rich, prosperous, young and prompt. One of them had the curiosity to see how they were rated at Dun's agency and found the above rating and was satisfied; but at the end these words were added, 'but they all drink.' He thought it a good joke at the time, but a few years later two of them were dead, another was a drunkard, and the fourth was poor, living partly on charity. That little note at the end of their rating was the most important and significant of all the facts connected with embodied in their description."

President Lincoln was once criticised by a friend for his seeming rudeness in declining to test some rare wines provided for his use. He answered, "I meant no disrespect, John, but I promised my precious mother only a few days before she died that I would never use anything intoxicating as a beverage, and I consider that promise as binding today as it was the day I gave it."

ATHLETES CONSIDER LIQUOR INJURIOUS TO THEM

Mr. Giannini, director of the New York Athletic Club, says, "Alcoholic liquors as a beverage, moderate or otherwise, are entirely tabooed by athletic trainers everywhere and under all circumstances."

Mr. H. S. Cornish, director of athletics in the new **[R4156 : page 92]** Manhattan Club, says, "I have never used intoxicating liquor in training, and never will. I do not believe in it. I don't

allow a man whom I am training to drink any liquor whatever, or to smoke either for that matter; it stimulates and affects unfavorably the action of the heart."

Total abstinence may be much more necessary today than it was centuries ago, because the race is gradually becoming weakened. It is the same in this as in the matter of marriage. Marriage between blood relatives, even of second cousins, is not sanctioned today because of the weakness of the race, whereas in Adam's time there was the closest of intermarriage, between brothers and sisters, without the slightest deleterious effect. Those who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, says the Apostle, and this argument should especially appeal to all who belong to the Lord's army, who are battling for righteousness and truth and for the uplifting of their fellow-men. Surely those who have their all upon the altar of consecration can well afford to deny themselves liberties in this direction in the interest of others so that their influence may be on the helpful side of this as well as every other question. **[R4156 : page 92]**

"WITHIN THE VAIL"

Homesick for heaven? and longing for its rest?
And does the way seem long that leads thee there?
Lift up thine eyes, the "vail" is growing thin
That separates us from its glories rare.
But yesterday a dear one passed beyond –
"Within the vail" – and entered into *rest*;
And as she passed we caught a radiant glimpse,
As when effulgent glory shineth in the west.

Another link is added to the chain
Of precious gold that draws us surely home,
Another strand is twined with the cord
Of love that holds us that we may not roam.
Yes, one by one his saints are passing o'er,

His loved from shadows into heaven's pure light,
Into the joy of his dear presence, where
They feel no more the darkness of earth's night.

But sweeter, grander still, "within the veil"
That almost grows transparent to our gaze,
We see our Master, our beloved Lord,
And lift to him our rapturous songs of praise.
So near we are, we almost catch the strains
Of heavenly music from celestial choirs.
Can we not bide with patience one more hour?
We've almost reached the goal of our desires!

Then let us not go mourning on our way,
But let our hearts be light, our faces glad,
These pressing burdens we shall soon lay down
Forevermore; why, then, should we be sad?
"A cloud of witnesses" behold our course
With interest intense, and shall we *fail*?
Our race is almost run; – Lord, nerve our hearts,
And scatter every doubt that doth assail.

So clarify our clouded vision, Lord,
So lift our thoughts and hearts to things above,
That earthly woes shall have no power to vex,
Nor separate us from thy grace and love.
While still we toss on life's tempestuous sea,
Shield from the rocks our tiny barques so frail,
Stand at the helm, and guide us safely till
We, too, are anchored safe "within the veil."

– *Alice G. James.*
