

CANADIAN

SON OF

TEMPERANCE



AND LITERARY GEM.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."—PROVERBS, Chap. 20.

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THE ENQUIRY.

Tell me, ye winged winds,
That round my pathway roar,
Do ye not know some spot
Where mortals weep no more?
Some lone and pleasant dell,
Some valley in the West,
Where free from toil and pain,
The weary soul may rest?
The loud wind softened to a whisper low,
And sighed for pity as it answered, "No!"

Tell me, thou mighty deep,
Whose billows round me play,
Know'st thou some favored spot,
Some island far away,
Where weary man may find
The bliss for which he sighs—
Where sorrow never lives,
And friendship never dies?
The loud waves rolling in perpetual flow,
Stopped for a while, and, murmuring, answered, "No!"

And thou, serenest moon,
Who with such holy face,
Dost look upon the earth
Asleep in night's embrace,
Know'st thou no better land—
Hast thou not seen some spot,
Where miserable man
Might find a happier lot?
Behind a cloud the moon withdrew in woe,
And in a sweet sad voice, responded, "No!"

Tell me, my secret soul,
Oh! tell me, Hope and Faith,
Is there no happier spot,
Where mortals may be blest,
And weariness a rest?
Faith, Hope, and Love—best boons to mortals given—
Waved their bright wings, and whispered, "Yes, in Heaven!"

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF DR. CHALMERS.

One fearful day the intelligence circulated through St. Andrews that a vessel had been driven on a sand-bank in the bay, to the eastward of the town. A crowd of sailors, citizens, and students soon collected upon the beach; for the vessel had been cast ashore but a few hundred yards from the houses, and she lay so near that, though the heavy air was darkened by the driving sleet, they could see at intervals the figures of the crew cling to rope or spar, ere each breaker burst upon her side, and shrouded all in surfy mist and darkness. In a calm sea, a few vigorous strokes would have carried a good swimmer to the vessel's side; but now the hardest fisherman drew back, and dare not face the fearful surge. At last a student of divinity volunteered. Tying a rope round his waist, and struggling through the surf, he threw himself among the waves. Forcing his slow way through the raging element, he was nearing the vessel's side, when his friends on shore, alarmed at the length of time and slow rate of recent progress, began to pull him back. Seizing a knife which he carried between his teeth he cut the rope away, and reaching at last the stranded sloop, drew a fresh one from her to the shore; but hungry, weak, and wearied, after four days tossing through the tempest, not one of the crew had strength or courage left to use it. He again rushed into the waves; he boarded the vessel; he took them man by man, and bore them to the land. Six men were rescued thus. His seventh charge was a boy, so helpless that twice was the hold let go, and twice had he to dive after him into the deep. Meantime, in breathless stillness, the crowd had watched each perilous passage, till the double figure was seen tossing landward through the spray. But when the deed was done, and the whole crew saved, a loud cheer of admiring triumph rose around the gallant youth.

This chivalrous action was performed by Mr. John Honey, one of Mr. Chalmers' early and cherished college friends, afterwards ordained as minister of Bendochy, in Perthshire. Though his great strength and courage bore him apparently untired through the efforts of that exhausting day, there was reason to believe that, in saving the lives of others, he had sacrificed his own. The seeds of a deceitful malady were sown, which afterwards proved fatal. Mr. Chalmers was asked, and consented, to preach his funeral sermon on the 30th of October, 1814, the Sabbath after the funeral. It was a brilliant autumn day. The number being too great to be accommodated in the church, one of the windows had been taken out, and a few boards threw across the sill to form a platform, from which the preacher, while standing but a yard or two from Mr. Honey's grave, might be heard by those within the building, and those seated on the shattered tombstones of the churchyard. A ham in the crowd (I now speak on the authority, and almost in the words of an eye-

witness), and a melancholy tolling of the bell announced the approach of the preacher, who, seated himself for a minute or two in an old elbow-chair, took the psalm-book from a little table before him, turned hastily over a few of the leaves, and then rose in the most awkward and even helpless manner. Before he read the lines which were to be sung, his large and apparently leaden eyes were turned towards the recent grave, with a look wildly pathetic, fraught with intense and indescribable passion. The psalm was read with no very promising elocution; and while the whole mass of the people were singing it, he sank into the chair, turned, seemingly, into a monumental statue of the coldest stone, so deadly pale, with his large broad face and forehead. The text was read; Deut. xxxii. 29—"O that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end!" The doctrinal truth which he meant to inculcate being established on a basis of reasoning so firm, that doubt could not move or sophistry shake it, he bounded at once on the structure which he had reared; and by that inborn and unteachable power of the spirit which nature has reserved for the chosen of her sons, and which shakes of the disadvantages and encumbrances of figure, and voice, and language, as easily as the steed shakes off the thistle-down from his side, carried the hearts and the passions of all who heard him with irresistible, and even tremendous sway. "It strikes me," said the preacher—and as the words were spoken there was a silence among the living almost as deep as that which reigned among the dead who lay beneath—"it strikes me as the most impressive of all sentiments, that it will be all the same a hundred years after this. It is often uttered in the form of a proverb, and with the levity of a mind that is not aware of its importance. A hundred years after this? Good heaven! with what speed and with what certainty will these hundred years come to their termination! This day will draw to a close, and a number of days make up one revolution of the seasons. Year follows year, and a number of years make a century. These little intervals of time accumulate, and fill up that mighty space which appears to the fancy so big and so immeasurable. The hundred years will come, and they will see the wreck of whole generations. Every living thing that now moves on the face of the earth will disappear from it. The infant that now hangs on his mother's bosom will only live in the remembrance of his grand-children. The scene of life and intelligence that is now before me will be changed into the dark and loathsome forms of corruption. The people who now hear me will cease to be spoken of; their memory will perish from the face of the country; their flesh will be devoured with worms; the dark and creeping things that live in the holes of the earth will feed upon their bodies; their coffins will have mouldered away, and their bones be thrown up in the new-made grave. And is this the consummation of all things? Is this the final end and issue of man? Is this the upshot of his living history? Is there nothing beyond time and the grave to alleviate the gloomy picture—to chase away these dismal images? Must we