

APRIL 12.—TEMPERANCE MEETING LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN B. GOUGH.

2 Sun. 22, 17-27.

HOME READINGS.

- Mon., April 6.—Living to the flesh. Gen. 25, 20-34.
Tues., April 7.—Drunkennes forbidden. Luke 21, 24-36.
Wed., April 8.—Shunning temptation. Prov. 6, 23-27.
Thurs., April 9.—Drink debases. Isa. 28, 7-10.
Fri., April 10.—Leads to poverty. Prov. 21, 16-18.
Sat., April 11.—Excludes from heaven. 1 Cor. 6, 9-11.

EXPOSITORY HINTS.

V. 18. "My strong enemy." Alcohol is indeed a strong enemy. It is the enemy of the church, the state, the home, of personal happiness and business prosperity.

V. 18. "Too strong for me." Intemperate habits are too strong for any man to conquer. None but God can gain the victory.

V. 19. "The Lord was my stay." Many a poor drunkard has found these words to be true. After struggling vainly for years to be free, he has found deliverance and help in God.

V. 20. "A large place." God has large places ready for those who will allow Him to lift them out of small ones.

LIFE OF JOHN B. GOUGH.

John B. Gough was probably the most versatile and eloquent temperance lecturer that ever lived. For many years, in England and America, the mere announcement of his name was sufficient to draw great audiences, which he moved at his will to laughter or tears. His indictment of the liquor traffic was a most terrible arraignment, and his stories of the wretchedness caused by strong drink thrilled every hearer.

Mr. Gough was the son of a common soldier in the British army, and was born at Sandgate, England, in 1817. His mother was a woman of very superior character, and bestowed the best education she could upon her son. When about twelve years of age John was sent to America to make his own way in the world. He worked on a farm, for a year or two, then went to New York, and learned the trade of book-binder. For a time he did very well, but soon contracted habits of intemperance, and suffered great poverty. His unusual dramatic ability opened up his way to the theatre, and for some years he earned a wretched living by singing comic songs and taking comedy parts on the stage. Every dollar that he obtained was squandered in dissipation, his clothes became shabby, and he was reduced to actual want. His first appearance in Boston was in the play: "Departed Spirits, or, The Temperance Hoax," in which Dr. Lyman Beecher and other prominent temperance men were held up to ridicule. Speaking of his condition at that time, he said: "Lower in the scale of mental and moral degradation I could not well sink." He was apparently beyond the hope of redemption.

The crisis in Mr. Gough's life came in 1842. Here in the story in his own words: On the last Sunday of October I wandered out into the streets and staggered along, homeless, aimless, and all but hopeless. Some one tapped me on the shoulder and said:

"Mr. Gough, I believe?"

"That is my name," I replied, and was passing on.

"You have been drinking to-day," said the stranger in a kind voice, which arrested my attention.

"Yes, sir," I replied, "I have."

"Why do you not sign the pledge?" was the next query.

I considered for a minute or two, and then informed the strange friend that I had no hope of ever again becoming a friend in the world who cared for me, that I fully expected to die very soon, and I cared not how soon.

The stranger regarded me with a benevolent look, took me by the arm, and asked me how I would like to be as I once was, respectable and esteemed.

"Only sign the pledge," remarked my friend, "and I warrant that it shall be so."

Oh, how pleasantly these words of kindness and promise fell on my crushed and bruised heart. I had long been a stranger to feelings such as now awoke in me. As a chord had been touched which vibrated to the tone of love. Hope once more dawned; and I began to think that there was hope for me. I resolved to try, and said to the stranger:

"Well, I will sign it."

"We have a temperance meeting to-morrow evening," he said. "Will you sign it then?"

"I will."

"That is right," said he, grasping my hand. "I will be there to see you."

Mr. Gough's street friend was Joel Stratton, who had the joy of seeing the drunkard sign the pledge the next night as promised.

Almost immediately Mr. Gough began to speak on temperance, showing unusual ability to interest and convince an audience. His marvellous gifts of mimicry were used to good advantage on the platform. He did not receive much for his early addresses, often not enough to pay expenses. On one occasion, when he had lectured without any remuneration, a very cordial vote of thanks was tendered to him. In replying, Mr. Gough requested that the resolution be put in writing, so that he might tender it to the railway conductor for his fare.

In later years he received very respectable fees for his public work, especially when he lectured on other subjects than temperance. He was noted for his remarkable gestures, and was described by the Dutchman as "dat man vat dalks mit his goat tails." On one occasion, speaking at Cobourg, Ont., with great energy, he made a violent gesture and tore his coat right down the back. He exclaimed: "There, I have torn my coat." The mayor of the town said: "I see you have." The lecture was concluded under some embarrassment. He had been known to strike his hand against a piece of wood, so violently as to bring the blood, but so absorbed was he in his address that he never noticed the accident until the lecture was over. John B. Gough died in Syracuse, after a lecture, his last public utterance being: "Young man, keep your record clean."

QUOTATIONS FROM GOUGH.

Poets may sing of the Circean cup,—praise in glowing terms the garlands which wreath it; wit may lend its brilliant aid to celebrate it, and even learning may invest it with a charm;—but when the poet's song shall have died and the garlands withered, and wits shall have ceased to sparkle, the baneful effects of the intoxicating draught will be felt, and then will the words of wisdom be fully verified in the miserable doom of the drunkard, "Wine is a mocker."

Saved I may be so as by fire, yet the scar of sin on me; the nails may be drawn, but the marks are there. Do I

not always bear about with me the remembrance of those days of dissipation? I never rise to speak but I think of it; the more I mingle with the wise, the pure, the true,—the higher my aspirations, the more intense is my disgust and abhorrence of the damning degradation of those seven years of my life from eighteen to twenty-five.

A man can never recover from the effect of such a seven years' experience, morally or physically. Lessons learned in such a school are not forgotten; impressions made in such a furnace of sin are permanent. Young men, I say to you, looking back at the fire where I lay scorching,—at the bed of torture where the iron entered my soul,—tamper not with the accursed thing, and may God forbid that you should ever suffer as I have suffered, or be called to fight such a battle as I fought for body and soul.

Dickens says of Mrs. Todgers,—"She was a hard woman, yet in her heart, aware up a great many stairs, there was a door, and on that door was written 'warning.' So in a heart of many a drunkard, away up a great many stairs, in a remote corner, easily passed by, is a door. Tap on it gently, again and again, and the quivering lip and the starting tear will tell you that you have been knocking at a man's heart and not a brute's. These men are worth saving."

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND LESSONS.

1. In addition to our efforts for prohibition, let us make much of moral suasion in seeking to rescue drunkards, and in preventing the young from forming habits of intemperance.

2. Let us remember that there is hope for all. No man is so low but he may be lifted. The most degraded man may be saved.

3. Many a man has been delivered from the thralldom of intemperance by means of the pledge. Make much of it. Get as many as possible of both young and old to sign it.

4. There is no greater human power than the personal influence of a good man. Joel Stratton was a plain, unlettered man, but the kind word that he spoke to a drunkard on the street was the means of saving a man who led hundreds of thousands to sign the pledge.

The Time and Way to Testify

The matter of public testimony in a meeting is of such great importance, both to the individual and the society, that the following suggestions from an exchange are of value to all:

Be among the first to speak. Delay only adds to the nervous shrinking felt by many timid souls.

Be willing even to blunder rather than make no attempt to speak for the Master.

When you get up to speak, be sure not to tell those present that you have not had time to give the topic a thought.

An ounce of your experience is worth more than a ton of trite quotations.

Read helps at home, but not in the meeting.

If you desire to confess your own faults, do so humbly, but it is an unwise and an unlovely thing to condemn or scold others.

Relate some story or incident that you have seen to illustrate some phase of the topic. A thought warm with life never falls to hit the mark. Avoid set phrases. Speak naturally.

Long-windedness, now pray take heed.

The finest discourse smothered;

So when you pray, or talk, or read,

Remember, there are others.

Do not try to do the easiest things, but do the hard things.