

The Quiet Hour.

World's Temperance Union.

Nov. 23, 1902; Isaiah 28:1-7

GOLDEN TEXT—Isa. 28:7. They also have erred through wine.

Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, v. 1. It is not alone the vulgar, illiterate, and homely who are "overcome with wine," but the refined, the accomplished, the beautiful. The higher and more sensitive the physical organization, the greater will be the injurious effects of alcohol upon it. Animals are not injured by the use of stimulants as human beings are. Intoxicants will steal the lustre from the eye of the brightest, the smile from the lip of the most cheerful, the pity from the heart of the kindest. It has no respect to man's person. No one is safe from its dangers in his own strength.

Trodden under feet, v. 3. There is a limit to probation. There comes a time when it is too late to change, when as in the case of Esau, repentance, though it be with bitter tears, cannot restore the lost brightness. The flames have gone so far that the building cannot be saved. So with strong drink; there is a time, while the habit is forming, when it is possible, however difficult, to leave off. But if the drinking goes on, the habit is so confirmed, the disease of the body is so wrought, the will so weak, that the drunkard may pray and strive with bitter tears for release and yet go straight to his cup again.

A mighty and strong one . . . a tempest of hail . . . a destroying storm . . . a flood of mighty waters, v. 2. The Assyrian hordes with all their fierceness and fury did not so much evil to Israel as intemperance has done and is now doing to men. It injures the body, ruins the soul, disables the mind, unfits for daily life, brings poverty, leads into bad company, injures family and friends, tempts others, leads to crime and fills poorhouses and prisons. What a category of evils!

Have erred through wine, v. 7. There is an old fable which tells of a man who had the choice of three sins he would commit—drunkenness, adultery or murder. He chose drunkenness as being apparently the least; but when he was intoxicated, so the story runs, he committed both the others, and thus ended by being guilty of all three.

Have erred through strong drink, v. 7. The strength of one evil habit may overcome even the greatest and best. Alexander the Great died at the early age of thirty-three the victim of his own excesses. We think of those two poets, the one a peer, the other a ploughman, who won for themselves the crown of the rarest genius, and yet were held by the chains of ignominious and debasing habit. The successful merchant, the skilful workman, the talented youth, the eloquent orator, the fervent preacher, all furnish us illustrations of the truth of this verse.

They are swallowed up of wine, v. 7. Strong drink is a devouring monster. It wastes money, changing comfort and plenty into poverty and want. It saps away strength of body and mind, leaving its victim a helpless wreck. It destroys the affections, turning love and kindness into selfishness and cruelty. It blunts the sense of right and wrong, paving the way for every kind of crime. Sooner or later it will swallow up everything that is noble and manly.

They err in vision, they stumble in judgment, v. 7. No matter what a man's business is, he has no more brain than he needs to do his work well; and liquor, even though taken moderately, will after a little limit his mental powers so that he cannot see things as they really are and so cannot judge anything correctly. We must be sober to have clear perceptions and sound judgment.

"In The Hour of Silence." *

We gladly welcome another volume of brief suggestive studies from the pen of Professor McFayden of Knox College. Like its predecessor "The Divine Pursuit" this little volume is a group of brief meditations on some of the things that pertain to the spiritual life. The studies are brief, because they are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Elaborate discussion does not always illuminate. "The best thing, one can do for a text is to let it shine in its own light" (preface). This statement is quite borne out by the contents of this book; in calling attention to the previous volume, "The Divine Pursuit," we laid stress upon the stimulating suggestive character of the short studies and pointed out how by allowing the text to shine in its own light the authors had given help not only to one reading for purpose of devotion, but also to the younger ministers who prize a valuable hint more than an elaborate outline. Professor McFayden feels that "the world is too much with us late and soon," and that we must have our hours of silence and moments of meditation if we are to stand well the constant strain of life. A contemporary speaks of Professor McFayden as combining "the mystic and the modern;" and there is much truth in that statement. Another Professor, a veteran in the field of English letters, Goldwin Smith, has suggested that such a combination is now impossible, and has hinted that mysticism is doomed to die. We dissent from that view, unless men are to be narrowed and mutilated, mysticism must remain alongside of intellectualism and blended with it. Poetry and religion must remain as well as mechanism and mathematics. As our author points out the Bible itself is the great inspiration of devotional literature; and we must each come into direct contact with that for purposes of edification as well as instruction. But in this as well as in the more critical department we can appreciate the help of a friendly and competent guide. When we are asked "understandest thou what thou readest," we are constrained to say, "How can I except some man guide me," and by guidance we mean not dogmatic deliverance but sympathetic help. True, we must dig for ourselves but we may receive help from those who have gone before. "As Prof. McFayden says finely, "Surface meanings are for idle souls; the more patiently and prayerfully we search the depths, the more surely and abundantly shall we find that well of water which springeth up into everlasting life." The following passage is a fair specimen of the style and spirit of the book:

"When Christ told His disciples to enter into their inner chamber and shut the door, He was not so much warning them against a vice—against the vice of hypocrisy in the deep things of religion. The religion of

that day was fond of parading itself in the synagogues and on the streets; and where two or three are gathered together there is always the temptation to hypocrisy. The presence of other men is a danger as well as an inspiration; and if we would know what manner of religious men we are, we have but to ask ourselves how much and how often we care to be in the inner chamber, when the door is shut. So far from courting the public gaze, we must enter upon the offices of devotion—Christ seems to say—almost as if we were doing a guilty thing, and afraid lest someone see and speak of us."

Then the point of this particular homily is put in this terse comprehensive fashion: "It was indeed one of the saintliest men who said that the greatest saints were wont to avoid human converse where they could. We would not say that to-day. We cannot forget that the greatest Saint of all went about among men continually. But though the cloister cannot be the whole of life, it must still be part of it." Because of its fine balance, its union of clear strong thought and true spirituality we can cordially recommend this book.

In the "Hour of Silence," by John Edgar McFayden B. A. (Oxon) M. A. (Glas) Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, \$1.00 net.

Murdock McKenzie in Orillia.

Last Sunday the Rev. Murdock McKenzie, of Hanan, China, preached two sermons of exceptional spiritual power, in Orillia Presbyterian church, says The Packet. The morning text was: "He came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." It was difficult for Canadians to realise the multitude of China's population. But the Christian who had seen them, in their slavery to custom; with their intense love of country; the degradation and hopelessness of heathenism; looking back upon the past, around on the things of earth, forward to a cheerless future, but seldom, very seldom, upward, it was not possible to avoid experiencing something of the compassion which the Master felt for the Jewish multitude, favoured as they were in many ways, yet rejecting the light, and misled by the traditions of their leaders. Confucianism gave an admirable theory of the relationships of this life, but nothing as to man's relationship to God. The Chinese possessed acute minds, scholars of much learning, shrewd merchants, the higher classes living in luxury—all that this world could offer. But it was like electric apparatus, complete in every particular yet lacking connection with the power, and therefore of no service in affording light or heat. Tell them of anything for the benefit of China short of Christianity and they would welcome it. They would be content to take Jesus into the idol temple and worship him with their other gods. But as it was in the days of old, so it was still, the claim that there was but one God, and that he alone should be worshipped, was an offence unto them. China contained all the human elements of greatness, and had it seemed good to God to turn Paul eastward into that country instead of westward into Europe, it probably would have been that Chinese missionaries, animated with the compassion of the Master, would be carrying the Gospel message to us. But he had seen fit to favour Europeans by giving them the message, and making them the channel by which he would convey the glad tidings to the multitudes of the east. The Saviour's