

Poetry.

Out and Into.

"He brought us out . . . that he might bring us in." -DEUT. vi. 22. Out of the distance and darkness so steep, Out of the settled and perilous sleep, Out of the region and shadow of death, Out of its foul and pestilent breath; Out of the bondage and wearying chains, Out of companionship ever with stains; Into the light and glory of God, Into the holiest, made clean by blood, Into his arms, the embrace and the kiss, Into the scene of ineffable bliss, Into the quiet and infinite calm, Into the place of the song and the psalm. Wonderful love, that has wrought all for me! Wonderful work, that has set me so free! Wonderful ground, upon which I have come! Wonderful tenderness, welcoming home!

The Visitor's Pulpit.

Timothy and his Medicine.

BY REV. JOHN ALDIS, CANTERBURY.

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (I Tim. v. 23.)

I am anxious to take this opportunity to point out the Scriptural basis on which the total abstinence movement rests. Some imagine that, though total abstinence is a very good thing, it finds no sanction in Scripture, and must be defended by weapons taken, not out of the sacred, but out of the secular armoury. If so, so much the worse for the principles of total abstinence. If they cannot bear the searching light of Scripture, let them be banished to the limbo of oblivion and contempt. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." "Let God be true and every man a liar." "The word of our God shall stand for ever." But I firmly believe that our work is of God. do not say that everything that has been said and done in its defence is of God. Many foolish and wrong things have been said and done in its defence, just as many foolish and wrong things have been said and done in defence of our holy religion. But Christianity is of God, notwithstanding the folly and sin of some of its professors. So our work is of God, notwithstanding the many failings of its advocates. It is for God's glory; it is in accordance with the principles of His Word. And because I believe this, I ask your candid, prayerful attention to some aspects of Scripture touching on this subject to-night.

Some may in thought reply: "Then you have chosen a strange text. You should have preached from 'Look not on the wine when it is red,' or some such passage; for your text makes dead against you. Well, let us see, Samson's riddle is often answered in experience; 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.'"

Our text occurs in a somewhat strange connection. Paul is exhorting Timothy as to the exercise of discipline in the Church. In the immediate context he says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man;" i. e. Be not hasty in ordaining any to office, lest by ordaining unworthy persons you become partaker of their sins. And the Apostle afterwards remarks, that the sins of some are quite manifest and can be detected at once, but the sins of others follow after, and are not found out immediately; so that great care is needful not to be hasty in ordaining any, lest the speedy appointment should be followed by long regrets. And for faithfulness in this difficult and delicate matter Timothy would need great courage; but evidently he was of a weak constitution and timid disposition. "See that he be with you without fear," Paul wrote of him to the Corinthians. And timidity is greatly increased by bodily infirmities, especially by dyspeptic maladies; so that Paul felt that his purpose as Doctor of Divinity would be furthered if he gave some instructions as Doctor of Medicine. "In order that thou mayest be faithful and impartial, take care of thy health; and to this end I advise thee: Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's

sake and thine often infirmities." Now what has this doctor's prescription to do with us? It teaches us, first, that Timothy was a total abstainer; secondly, that Paul does not object to his total abstinence on moral or religious grounds; but, lastly, on medical grounds he advised him to lay the practice aside.

I. TIMOTHY WAS A TOTAL ABSTAINER.

"Drink no longer water." Then it is obvious that up to this time Timothy had been a water-drinker. For no one would pretend that Paul meant that Timothy was never more to drink a draught of water; but he advised him not to drink water only. So that up to this time he had drunk water only; i. e., he was a total abstainer from all intoxicating drinks. It is an indisputable and interesting fact that this son of Paul in the faith, whom he loved so tenderly, to whom he entrusted most important work in the kingdom of Christ, and who occupied a very prominent position in the Apostolic Church, practiced that abstinence which many of us practice and advocate. How long he had been an abstainer, we cannot say; but either he became one after his conversion, or the habit was formed in his childhood or youth. If he became a total abstainer after his conversion, it is fair to infer that the practice prevailed more or less among the Christians of his day. The sentiment which induced him to take this step would no doubt avail with many more; so that, on this supposition, total abstinence, it is evident, was practised and approved among the Apostolic churches. Or we may suppose that Timothy was brought up as a total abstainer from his childhood in that pious Jewish home. And as precept goes not far without example, it seems likely that his devout mother, Eunice, and his aged grandmother, Lois, were themselves what they induced Timothy to become—total abstainers. If these pious Jewesses were, it is almost certain that others of their friends were like-minded. And thus there was a little "Band of Hope" in Lystra, as centuries before a "Band of Hope" had been formed in Babyon, when four Jewish boys banded together in the pledge that they would not drink the king's wine, nor eat of his luxurious viands, but that water and pulse should be their diet; a pledge taken in "hope" that thus they should escape many snares and dangers, and that they should in no way suffer in health. Their hopes were fulfilled, for in ten days they were fairer and fatter than those who drank the king's wine and ate the king's meat. If Timothy thus early became a total abstainer it is obvious that he did not relinquish the practice on becoming a Christian; and his standing as a Christian and a minister was no way damaged thereby. And as this epistle was written some twenty years after Paul first met Timothy at Lystra, he was probably a total abstainer of twenty years' standing. He must have had some difficulty in maintaining his ground. I suppose the advice given in our text was not the first advice of the kind he had received. Unless things were vastly different then from now, I have no doubt that some of the good, well-minded ladies and gentlemen in the churches, when they saw how pale and delicate he was, and that he seemed very tired after preaching, urged him to take a glass of wine, at least now and then; and some of them sent him some bottles which they said were of a very choice vintage, and that if he would only drink them he would be able to do much more for the glory of God. But Timothy returned them with thanks, and stuck to his principles, until at length Paul deemed it needful to interfere, and urged him to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities.

Thus, then, total abstinence is no modern innovation, no new heresy in the Christian Church. We need not be ashamed of our company. Timothy, an excellent and eminent teacher in the Apostolic Church, is with us, and it is fair to infer that he was not alone. If he took this stand doubtless many more, and not a few of them induced by his example, thought and acted even as he. If we choose to go further back we have some very respectable predecessors. The priests were commanded by God to be total abstainers whilst engaged in their ministrations. The Nazirites were total abstainers; some of them taking a life-pledge, and others a pledge only for a limited time. Among the most illustrious of these were Samson and John the Baptist, and probably also Samuel and Elijah. The tribes of the Rechabites through many generations were total abstainers; Daniel and his band were total abstainers. Thus in different ages many eminent men in the church of God have been total abstainers. And in the present day Christians of all denominations are giving the question serious consideration; and not only the poor and uneducated, but many of culture and talent, have given in their adherence. I repeat: we need not be ashamed of our company. The fact is clear and significant: Timothy was a total abstainer.

II. PAUL DOES NOT OBJECT TO TIMOTHY'S TOTAL ABSTINENCE ON MORAL OR RELIGIOUS GROUNDS.

We have seen clearly that Timothy was a total abstainer. As he was Paul's son in the faith, and deeply loved and revered his spiritual father, it seems quite certain that if the Apostle had manifested disapprobation of his practice Timothy would have abandoned it. Had Paul seen anything subversive to the Christian faith, anything improperly ascetic, anything injurious to Timothy's character and usefulness in his total abstinence, he would doubtless have warned him against it; for

Paul was not the man to shrink from telling his friends their faults. When he saw that Peter, by refusing to eat with the Gentiles, endangered the truth of the Gospel, he rebuked him before all, "withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed." Much more would he have opposed Timothy's abstinence, if he had seen anything in it contrary to the Gospel. But the evidence goes to show that Paul made no objection, and therefore we conclude that he did not disapprove of his practice. This argument holds good in either supposition. Supposing that Timothy was a total abstainer from his boyhood, surely during the twenty years that he had known the Apostle, if the practice had been pernicious it would have been abandoned. Or, supposing that Timothy became a total abstainer after his conversion, then the argument is no less conclusive; for Timothy would not have begun or continued a practice which Paul disapproved. And now, after they have known one another for twenty years, and Paul refers to Timothy's total abstinence, he says not one word against it on moral and religious grounds, and the fair inference is that he had nothing to say; it is on medical grounds, and medical grounds alone that he desires him to alter his course. Paul did not condemn total abstinence; therefore let none condemn it now.

It is not a mischievous piece of asceticism, otherwise Paul would have condemned it as such; for he was wont to condemn asceticism when he met with it. He condemns those who were subject, as parts of their religion, to the ordinances and commandments of men. "Touch not, taste not, handle not." (Col. ii. 21.) But he does not place Timothy's refusal to taste wine in the same list. In this very epistle he condemns asceticism (Tim. iv. 3, 4.) "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." But Paul says not a word to imply that Timothy's total abstinence was a sinful neglect of the good creatures of God.

And if, as some suppose, total abstinence were a dangerous forsaking of the freedom of the Gospel, or a putting something else before the Gospel, or a denial of the sufficiency of the grace of God; if in any way Timothy's total abstinence had been a dishonour to the glorious Gospel, depend upon it Paul would have denounced it; for he was ever quick to detect, and eager to condemn any slight put upon the Gospel. He would not have said simply, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." No, he would have thundered out, "Have done with this miserable water-drinking, you are putting it before the Gospel. Drink wine which maketh glad the heart, and with your glad heart praise God for this his good creature." Get out of the legal bondage of the teetotallers. Drink wine fearlessly, and show that the grace of God is sufficient for you; total abstinence is an insult to the all-sufficient grace of God." But not a word of all this is traced by his pen, for not a thought or feeling of the kind was in his heart. Our second position seems to be clearly established—Paul did not disapprove of Timothy's total abstinence on moral or religious grounds.

Then we have no reason to be ashamed of our principles or practice. We are under no obligation to drink wine. We in no way interfere with Gospel liberty, nor frustrate the grace of God by declining it. What Paul says of meat is certainly equally true of wine. "Wine commendeth us not to God, for neither if we drink are we the better, neither if we drink not are we the worse." On all this may be based an earnest appeal to those who cannot see their way clear to join us. I pray you, do nothing to hinder our work. Paul did not condemn total abstinence, surely you need not. If teetotallers say or do what is wrong, condemn their mal-practices, but never condemn, never thwart total abstinence. One of the sins solemnly charged against Israel is, "I raised up of your young men for Nazirites, but ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink." Be not chargeable with the same fault. Hinder not the work, I pray you. Speak not scornfully of it; do not ridicule it. Dissuade none from joining it; above all, tempt none to forsake it. If ye will go no further, at least "Let these men alone, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

But are there sufficient reasons to make it desirable for us to practice total abstinence? I believe there are. It appears that Timothy saw good reason for this course, and we have seen that Paul did not disapprove of his conduct. But there are far more cogent reasons for our total abstinence than for Timothy's. Drunkenness was a sin in Palestine, but it is the sin in England. Circumstances are so altered that even if there were no sufficient reasons for total abstinence in apostolic days, it by no means follows that there are no sufficient reasons for us. If I were a Frenchman, I should not attach much importance to this question, for drunkenness is not a prevalent vice in France. If I were a Chinaman, I should pledge myself to do battle against the curse of opium. But I am an Englishman, and therefore I feel it incumbent on me to battle against our national vice of drunkenness. For drink is the greatest curse of our country. The squalid poverty, the odious vice, the debasing crime, are mainly traceable to the drink. And I would that all Christian men and women realized the importance of taking a stand here, and came up to the

help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty foe.

We know not what were Timothy's reasons for total abstinence, but we can easily state our own.

(1) Within certain limits the mortification of the flesh is a good thing. The tendency of the present day is towards excessive luxury, and this is enervating the church, and rendering men less disposed for communion with God. Thus of old the Nazirite vow of total abstinence was commended, in some cases enjoined; and doubtless their abstemiousness proved an aid to devotion. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:—"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Total abstinence is a wholesome and harmless mortification of the flesh.

(2) That should be avoided which proves a snare to us. "If thy right eye cause thee offence, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; and if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee." Strong drink proves a stumbling-block to the multitudes, and, therefore, even if it be pleasant and useful as the right hand and eye, they at least should avoid it. The priests of old were commanded to be total abstainers during the days of their ministration, lest they should be unfitted for their work. The drink, which might cause them to offend, was to be avoided by them. And let each of us ask: Is this drink a snare to me? Is it likely to become one? It has proved a snare to vast multitudes. It has blasted some of the fairest ministerial reputations. It has degraded multitudes of our church members, and nipped in the bud many promises of usefulness. And is it safe to say, Though it has proved a snare to others, it will prove no snare to me? Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Stronger men and women than any of us have been overcome; and the more unwilling we are to give it up, the greater is our danger. The huge motley ranks of the drunkards are recruited from unsuspecting moderate drinkers, who deem their position safe. Specially would I beseech young people to avoid the danger. "It is not for you, Lemuels, to drink wine, nor for you who should be princes, the king's sons and daughters, to drink strong drink."

(3) That should be avoided by us which proves a snare to those with whom we come in contact. An inspired authority says, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (Rom. xiv. 21.) In the face of such a text as this, it amazes me that sometimes even Christian people will have wine or beer on their tables, when they know that members of their own family are being ruined thereby; even wives whose lives are made miserable by drunken husbands often will not give it up. And all of us in some way or other come in contact with some to whom drink is a snare, and the practice of total abstinence on the part of any one of us will have at least some influence in the right direction over others. Many believe that it is a very good thing for ministers and others in public positions to abstain for the sake of example. Then for the sake of example is it not good for others to abstain too? for all exert an influence more or less extensive? And especially in our country, where drinking is the one great curse, the fruitful source of all other woes, is it not an eminently wise and Christian thing altogether to avoid this which multitudes of our fellow-countrymen cannot touch without being ruined thereby? Your avoiding it will do something, probably much more than you suppose, to keep others from the snare.

But some will say, is not the use of wine and strong drink permitted in the Bible? Most certainly it is. Excess only is forbidden. If you see it right to drink in moderation, you are at liberty to do so. But I think I have shown some good reasons to prove that in this drink-cursed land it is a far wiser and more Christian course altogether to abstain. Says Paul, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Cor. vi. 12.) Again, "All things are lawful for me, but all are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." I am not come to lay down the law and say, Thou shalt not drink. I am come on a far nobler mission, to lead you to a Christian privilege. I invite you cheerfully to forego a right for Christ's sake; for the sake of His Church which is hindered by strong drink, for the sake of our poor country which is half ruined by strong drink, and for your own sakes too, who may be endangered thereby. Herbert sings of a man—

How canst thou brook his foolishness? Why, he'll not lose a cup of drink for thee. Bid him but temper his excess; Not he.

But let not this be true of any Christian man. David would not drink the coveted water from Bethlehem's well, but poured it out before the Lord, because of the terrible risk the men ran who fetched it. So (to use David's bold figure), we will not drink the blood of these men, who have not only jeoparded, but in many cases have forfeited their lives, by that very drink that many would press to our lips. Rather would we pour it out, and that shall be a more acceptable libation, to the Lord. Lord Jesus, we gladly give it up for Thy glory, for the good of poor sinners, for whom Thou hast died! And this little self-denial laid on Thine altar is grateful to Thee, "an odour of a sweet smell, a

sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God."

III. ON MEDICAL GROUNDS, PAUL URGED TIMOTHY TO LAY HIS TOTAL ABSTINENCE ASIDE.

at any rate for a time. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." We have seen that Paul did not disapprove of Timothy's total abstinence. We have seen abundant evidence of the Christian expediency of total abstinence. This should settle the question for most of us. For, thank God, we are in fairly good health, and need neither doctor nor medicine. If all were total abstainers, except those who require drink on medical grounds, there would not be much need for our work.

But Paul recommends wine to Timothy as a medicine. "Do thyself no harm," is Gospel advice. "If you are convinced that a little stimulant is necessary for you as medicine for a time, you ought to take it. But as to this doctor's prescription of Paul, several things must be borne in mind.

Inspiration was not designed to teach the physical sciences. The recent discoveries of astronomy were not revealed to Moses. Had these wonderful facts and laws which God intended to be discovered after long and patient investigation been incorporated in the Bible, much in the Book would have been unintelligible for ages. So, I suppose, there was no medical revelation made by God to the Apostle Paul. He knew that Timothy was weak, and under Divine guidance, according to the medical opinion of the day, he prescribed wine. But this prescription no way decides the scientific question, whether or no wine be a good medicine for us, any more than Isaiah's prescription of figs for Hezekiah's sores, prove that a fig plaster is the best cure for boils. Luke, the beloved physician, was neither the better nor the worse doctor because he was an inspired Evangelist. The Balm of Gilead, the Physician of Souls, is revealed in the Bible; but it is out of the province of revelation to teach what are the best remedies for the ills our flesh is heir to. Medical questions have to be decided on medical evidence. Paul wrote according to the medical opinion of the day. And we have some knowledge of the kind of medical authorities with which Paul would be conversant. A physician named Aretæus was probably contemporary with Paul, and there is some reason to suppose that he might be studying medicine in Tarsus, while Paul was in that city. For stomach complaints he recommends wine, and reminding us of our text, says, "Such disorders are common to those who toil in teaching; whose yearning is often divine instruction, who despise delicate and varied diet, whose nourishment is fasting, and whose drink is water." For such he prescribes "a little wine, and some other more liberal sustenance."

Then further we do not know what sort of wine Paul prescribed, so that the prescription is of little use to us. The writer of the article on wine in Dr. Smith's "Bible Dictionary" says: "It may at once be conceded that the Hebrew terms translated wine, refer occasionally to an unfermented liquor." But I do not suppose unfermented wine is intended here. Timothy would scarcely need much persuasion to drink the pure and harmless juice of the grape. But remember, the wines then in use were for the most part very light, more like claret, than sherry or port. And mark the great moderation. Not "Drink three glasses of old port every day, and some whiskey-and-water at night;" but use—he does not even say drink—use a little wine, as Ambrose paraphrases it, "moderately, that is, medically; just a little for a remedy, not much for delight." If you would follow Dr. Paul's prescription, you must be very moderate indeed.

But the medical question must be settled on medical grounds; and the doctors are rapidly losing faith in alcohol. The foremost men in the profession tell us that persons in health do not need it; that it neither gives strength nor warmth; that even as a medicine it often does more harm than good, and only occasionally is of real worth. But we know that it produces a thousand times as much disease as it cures, and leads to untold misery and sin. And like other injurious medicines, such as calomel, once largely used, but now superseded, when we need medicine, let us eschew alcohol, and, if possible, take other remedies instead.

In conclusion, be like Timothy, total abstainers. And if your practice be based on a sincere desire to glorify God, and to benefit your fellows, and if you act with fervent charity towards those who differ from you, you will certainly meet with the Divine approval. And God grant that you may enjoy health and strength, and not even for medicine need to resort to wine.

Some may object, "This is not preaching the Gospel." It does not profess to be. It is simply an endeavour to aid in taking one of the great stumbling-blocks out of the way so as to prepare the way of the Lord. Far be it from me to put total abstinence before the Gospel in the sense of regarding it as the more important of the two. But in many cases it does come before the Gospel in the order of time. Make the intemperate sober, break the chain of drink, and then one great barrier to their acceptance of Christ will be removed, and they will be the readier to welcome the Gospel, which is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," Article "Medicine," page 290.