

What Some Men in the Liquor Business Have Told Me

CONSIDERABLE space in this number is devoted to Temperance, Prohibition, and associated themes. While many good reasons for the suppression of the liquor trade may be given, and much sound advice be offered to our young people counselling total abstinence from intoxicants, I doubt if I could say anything more impressive or worthy of study than some of the things that men in the business have at different times said to me. Let me recall just a few instances.

A Command to Silence

Years ago, when I was but a struggling boy, anxious above all things else to fit myself for life, it was my lot to work for several months in a quite large establishment where both groceries and liquors were sold. It was in the days before the division of the premises for the sale of the goods, and liquors and solids were handled with exactly the same freedom over the one counter. On my entrance upon my duties I was somewhat startled at the admonition given me at the very outset by my employer. He directed me as to certain things I was to do, and concluded by saying, "And remember, young fellow, that what you see here, nobody else knows." This command to silence, for it was nothing short of that, set me thinking, and during the period of service I put in there I saw that his counsel was based on a thoroughly selfish policy as far as his business interests were concerned. I concluded then, and have never had good reasons for changing my conviction, that the liquor trade is, as far as it dare be, an utterly lawless one, and that it is, as a business, just as regardless of all legal restrictions as it has power to be. The morals behind it will not stand inspection, and that "nobody else knows" is the policy controlling it throughout has been very clear to me from the day I was first so counselled, to the present.

An Expressive Adjective

I was engaged one day in the cellar when the boss had occasion to rouse out a flask for a customer. He was ever a thoughtful man, always kindly in his intercourse with me, and I verily believe in the business against his better judgment. But, apart from all that, he dropped a remark that day that I can never forget. As if disgusted with the whole trade and all connected with it, he said to me as he stood at the tap, flask in hand, "What fools men are, Tom, to drink this damned stuff." I have no disposition to moralize, and here I leave it. The adjective was emphatic, and I make no apologies for repeating it here. Why he was in the business I could only conjecture, but his opinion of the traffic may be deduced from his expression. I thoroughly agreed with him then, and have since never changed my mind. His designation of the men who drank as "fools" may appear strong, but it was true then, is true now, and always will be the same. Nobody but a "fool" will, in my opinion, use it, or advise its use. I soon began to realize, about a "fool" myself to stay in the employ of any man who dealt in such stuff, and though it seemed impolitic at the time, I gave up my job and quit any and all connection whatever with the trade. But what I learned in the few months I worked in that establishment, about the utter lawlessness of the whole liquor business has been of great practical use to me many times since.

The Same Expression Again

I went one day in the discharge of my duty on an errand to a "tavern,"

as we called the smaller hotels in those days. The proprietor was behind his bar. I did my errand, and as I was about to retire he good-naturedly invited me to "take something." I declined, and said, "Thank you; I do not drink." I have never forgotten the respectful look which he gave me, as, speaking with evident sincerity, he said, "Young fellow, you're right; don't touch it. I haven't drunk a drop of the damned stuff myself for fourteen years." I think he spoke what he really meant, and that the advice he gave me was right in line with his better nature and good judgment. I was passing by the corner, not long ago, where that tavern once stood, and asked the gentleman who was with me if he could tell me anything about Mr. ———, who did business there in those years gone by. "Dead ten years ago," he remarked. So with the merchant for whom I was working at the time referred to. "Dead," both of them dead! Like many more, they were evidently in the business for the money to be made through the folly of other men; but of what account or value is it all now? As I think of these two men and their candid remarks to me, I shudder for the selfishness that prompts men to make gain out of what

THE PROGRESS OF DRINKING.

The social glass leads on to the glass suggestive or the glass inspiring, and the glass restorative leads on to the glass strength-giving, and then again to glasses fast and frequent—glasses care-drawling, science-coaxing, grief-dispelling—till, gasping and dying, the hulk is towed ashore and pierced through with many sins, weak, wasted, worthless, the victim gives up the performance, leaving in the tainted air a disastrous memory.—Dr. J. Hamilton.

they frankly admit is the foolishness of their fellows, and out of traffic in stuff that they designate "damned." God pity them.

A Son to be Proud Of

When I was stationed at ——— I was called upon to officiate at the marriage of a bright young woman of my congregation and to a young man of an adjacent city. The groom was one of the sons of a well-known hotelkeeper, who, with several other members of his family, was present at the wedding. A younger son was groomsmen in waiting on another brother. The marriage had been performed, and in the general mix-up of guests that followed the congratulations, I found myself in close proximity to the father of the boys in question. After a few words of general conversation, our remarks naturally turned to the wedding party. The older man called my special attention to the younger of the two men before us. He was evidently very proud of him, and remarked, "Isn't he a dandy?" Now, he meant this as a compliment to his boy, not as a slight or a reflection on him. And the young man was well deserving the praise of his father if outward signs were true. His splendid appearance and manly bearing stamped him all his proud father thought him. But the comment of the father did not stop with the remark quoted. He continued, "He sings in St. Andrew's Choir, goes to Sunday School every Sunday, never smokes, and doesn't even know the taste of liquor."

Surely that was a record to be proud of. But the old man was not yet through. With a satisfied smile, he said, "He's over twenty-one, too and what do you think of that, him brought up in a hotel all his life? I thought a good deal of it, and told the gray-headed man so; but, all the same, I could not help wondering about the boys, some other fathers' sons, young men once full of promise, too, who had not escaped the taint and pollution of the bar during those same twenty-one years. What did this fond father mean? He loved his boy; of that there was no doubt in the world. He was proud of him, that was equally evident. He felt free to praise him to the minister. He lost no passing opportunity to laud his splendid qualities. All this was good; but what was the ground of it all? His boy, 'brought up in a hotel all his life,' as he had been, had formed none of the vicious habits that might have been expected in his environment, and his regular attendance at the Sunday School and Church services was a goodly thing to be commended. The father practically gratulated himself that his boy had not been damaged by what had ruined many another boy. Read behind it all, and even a superficial glance into that father's heart showed his honest judgment condemned the very business in which he was engaged. None knew better than he, what his own boy had escaped; none knew better than he, too, the awful depths of degradation into which other boys had fallen while his own son had been growing up. The men who sell it know, perhaps better than anyone else, the awful ruin and wreckage wrought by strong drink, and none of them want their own sons to use it. Why they should be licensed to sell it to other men's sons I cannot see. If the intoxicating liquor trade of the hotel man's son, it is not good for any other man's boy, and the more plainly we state the fact the better. Yet the business cannot be run without boys, and a spirit of callous indifference to other fathers' feelings, so long as his own base, selfish greed is satisfied in one of its fruits in the liquor-seller's own heart. Society is full of sad examples of the truth of this.

An Anxious Father

When stationed at ——— I came to know quite intimately the children of a certain hotelman. They were as beautiful and full of promise as any in my congregation. They were the best of them were earnest in their desire to be Christians, and wanted to work for God. And the father himself was a good-hearted and generous man in many respects. But the hotel paid, and for the money in the liquor business he was willing to take any risk with his family. When speaking to him one day about his own non-attendance at church, and the promise of his children, he freely expressed his appreciation of my interest in their welfare, and, referring to the boy his own son, he said, "I was, I confessed to me his concern for him, because he found it "almost impossible to keep him out of the bar." Right well he knew its evil associations to be wholly unfit for a growing boy, and his anxiety that the lad might somehow be persuaded to remain away from it, was quite natural. "But why should the boy have free access to the place if the business transacted there is quite legitimate and proper?" The more I tried to reason out such a question in all its bearings, the deeper became my conviction that the hotelkeeper knew

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