

cause of truth. But if the facts be facts, indisputable, and for the most part undisputed, and then if they do not speak to you for themselves, I know nothing else that can or will. If they do not carry with them their own fire; if they do not plead with you, clear as a voice from Sinai, in their barest and briefest reality, and spur you to seek redress—

"If not the face of men,  
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse,  
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,  
And every man home to his idle bed."

Those who plead for temperance reform are daily charged with exaggeration. Exaggeration is never right, never wise, even when moral indignation renders it excusable; but before you repeat that hackneyed and irrelevant charge, remember that there never yet was prophet or reformer, since time began, against whom the same charge has not been made. We have no need to exaggerate; our cause is overwhelmingly strong in unvarnished realities, and we have nothing to do but to set forth things as they are, till not only the serious, and the earnest, but even the comfortable, and even the callous, yes, even the careless and the selfish, unless they are content to forego altogether the name of patriot, and the name of Christ, shall be compelled to note them for very shame.

1. Begin, then, with the fact, that the direct expenditure of the nation for intoxicating drinks is reckoned at £130,000,000 a year, and the indirect, which we are forced to pay for the results of drunkenness, £100,000,000 more. Maintain, if you will, that alcohol is a harmless luxury; you still cannot deny that for the vast majority it is not a necessity. Whole races of men, the votaries of whole religions, do without it, and gain by its absence. From 20,000 prisoners in England, it is cut off from the day of their imprisonment, and they are not the worse, but the stronger and healthier from its withdrawal. There are some five million total abstainers in England, and the impartial statistics of insurance prove conclusively that longevity is increased by abstention from it. The most magnificent feats of strength and endurance of which mankind has ever heard have been achieved without it. At the very best, then, it is a luxury. If it were not so, three Chancellors of the Exchequer would not have congratulated the nation on the diminution of revenue drawn from the sale of it; nor would a speech from the Throne express satisfaction at this loss of income. Being, then, at the best a luxury, even if no harm came of it, I ask you seriously whether we can, in these days, bear the exhaustion which arises from this terrible drain on our national resources? We live in anxious times. The pressure of life, the intensity of competition, both in the nation itself and with other nations, is very severe. Of late two daily newspapers have been filled with correspondence which prove the state of middle-class society. One has given expression to the sorrows and struggles of thousands of clerks in our cities, and has told the dismal story of their hopeless and grinding poverty. The other has revealed with what agonies of misgiving thousands of parents contemplate the difficulty of starting their sons in the crowded race of life. Can there be a shadow of a doubt that the nation would be better prepared for the vast growth of its population, that the conditions of average life would be less burdensome if we abandoned a needless and, therefore, wasteful expenditure? Would not the position of England be more secure if that vast river of wasted gold were diverted into more fruitful channels?—if the 88½ millions of bushels of grain (as much as is produced in all Scotland) which are now mashed into deleterious drink, were turned into useful food?—if the 69 thousands of acres of good land now devoted to hops were used for cereals?—if England were relieved from the burden of supporting the mass of misery, crime, pauperism, and madness which drunkenness entails? Even in this respect, as Sir Matthew Hale said two centuries ago, "*perimus licitis*, we are perishing by permitted things." A Chinese tradition tells us that when, 4,000 years ago, their Emperor forbade the use of intoxicants, heaven rained gold for three days. Looking at the matter on grounds simply economical—considering only the fact that the working classes drink, in grossly adulterated beer and maddening spirits, as much as they pay in rent—considering that there is hardly a pauper in England who has not wasted on intoxicants enough to have secured him long ago a freehold house and a good annuity—I say that if the curse of drink were thoroughly expelled it would rain gold in England not for three days but for many days.

2. We have assumed hitherto that intoxicating drinks are nothing in the world but a harmless luxury; but every man knows that they are not. The voice of science has laid it down unconditionally that all the young, and all who are in perfect health, do not need them, and are better without them. Many of the

highest scientific authorities tell us further that even their moderate use is the cause of many painful disorders and thousands of premature deaths. In the middle classes, the use of two wines—claret and sherry—is nearly universal; and even in the last few days the rival vendors of these wines have been telling the world that each of these wines consists of strange concoctions which are the cause of gout and all sorts of gastric disorders. Further, we know, by the universal experience of the world, that wherever drinking is nationally common, drunkenness becomes nationally ruinous. And for this reason, alcohol is one of the number of lethal drugs which have the fatal property of creating for themselves a crave which in multitudes becomes an appetite; an appetite which strengthens into a vice; a vice which ends in disease; a disease which constitutes a crushing and degrading slavery. To myriads of human beings it creates a needless, an artificial, a physical temptation, which first draws, then drags, then drives as with a scourge of fire.

"In their helpless misery blind,  
A deeper prison and a heavier chain they find,  
And stronger tyrants."

Aristotle said of human nature, generally, that "We are prone rather to excess than to moderation;" but this natural propensity, this fatal bias, this original sin, is infinitely strengthened when it works, not only as a moral impulse, but as a physical law. No drunkard, since time began, ever meant to be a drunkard. To be a drunkard means nothing less than awful shipwreck of life and body; the curse of life; the agony of conscience; the obliteration of nobleness and hope. Why, then, are there 600,000 drunkards in England? Why is it that through drink we have seen "the stars of heaven fall and the cedars of Lebanon laid low?" The flood was scarcely dried before Noah, discovering drink, introduced it into his own family, and among mankind, a curse and an infamy:

"Which since hath overwhelmed and drowned  
Far greater numbers on dry ground  
Of wretched mankind, one by one,  
Than e'er before the flood had done."

They who will make a young tiger their plaything must not be surprised if there be some to whom it will show, at last, a wild trick of its ancestors. In every nation where there is a free temptation to drink there will be many drunkards, and for this reason, that drink induces a taste which is neither hunger, nor thirst, nor pleasure, nor reasonable want, but a morbid impulse, an indefinable desire, and

"Like the insane root,  
It takes the reason prisoner."

3. Then, next, what does the prevalence of drunkenness involve? It means that to thousands life becomes a long disease. Solomon told us that truth 3,000 years ago. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babblings? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Delirium tremens—that inconceivably awful and agonizing illness—is but one of God's executioners upon excess. The fact that a nation is addicted to drink and drunkenness means that the health of myriads will be ruined; it means that myriads of children, with diseased bodies, fatuous minds, and depraved impulses, will be, in the awful language of an old preacher, "not born into the world, but damned into the world," as idiots, or cripples, or predestined drunkards; a curse to nations, a curse to their neighbors and to themselves, a curse to the very ideal of humanity which they drag down and degrade, poisoning its very life-blood, and barring its progress to the goal of better days. Oh! nations may enjoy their revelries; but the river of enjoyment flows into a sea of misery, and disease is only indulgence taken at a later stage.

4. Nor is it only the bodies of men that suffer; it is their souls. Powerless for his deliverance, the conscience of the drunkard is not powerless for his torture. Robert Burns, Charles Lamb, and Hartley Coleridge have uttered the cry of men who have thus been swept over the cataract. The Spartans, when they wished to turn their children from the shame of intemperance, showed them the physical degradations of drunken Helots; but the physical results are nothing to the moral devastation, the abject servitude, the spiritual catastrophe of the man who has given himself over to the bondage of drink. When he recovers from the degradation of the animal, it is to feel the anguish of a lost soul. That is the reason why, year by year, drink not only crowds the workhouse with paupers, and the gaol with felons, and the asylum with lunatics, and the hospital with disease, but also swells more than any other cause—swells week by

week and year by year—the list of those who, through the awful gate of suicide, rush, with rude insult, into the presence of their God. "The measure of alcohol consumed in a district," says Baron Dowse, "is the measure of the degradation." Wherever the drink tide rises highest, there, too, is the high-water of suicide, mortality and crime. Wherewithal a man or a nation sinneth, by the same shall he be punished.

5. Nor is this all. The curse does not stay with him who caused it. It spreads in concentric circles of ruin. The drunkard almost invariably drags down his wife and family into the lurid whirlpool of his own retribution. Go to some public house on Saturday night, between ten and twelve, when the miserable working man is pouring into the till of the publican and the purse of the gin distiller, the money which should clothe and feed his wife and little ones; see, when the gin palaces in our most pauperised districts are cleared at night, a scene which, for vileness cannot be paralleled in any region of the world. Then follow the drunken man or drunken woman into the lair which they call their home. Home? it is a Dantean hell of brutality and squalor, of which the very air reeks with abomination! "In former times the wife was usually the victim of her husband's brutishness; now she becomes in innumerable cases the partner in his sin. In either case, be she victim or associate, no creature on earth so demands our pity." While threats and blows resound in that curse-laden air, the children—the ragged, miserable, half-starved, degraded children—the children who will grow up hereafter to recruit the ranks of the felon and the harlot, huddle together in mute terror. "They do not cry; such children seldom do shed tears. Nature could never furnish a foundation to meet such demands." Often they make their escape into cellar or chimney, or hide themselves under the rotting heap of rags or straw, and do not venture to creep out, half-suffocated, till the drink-maddened fiend whom they call "father" is away, or till he has slept off for a time the vitriol madness. And in most of our large towns there are whole streets, and alleys, and districts of such drunkards' homes—infamous streets which hide hundreds of blighted families, the disgrace of our civilization and the disgrace of our Christianity; the only things which flourish there are the public-houses, which, confronting the minimum of virtue with the maximum of temptation, drain from the wretched neighborhood its last life, and, like the fungus on the decaying tree, feed on the ruin which is their boon. We have heard much in these few days of "Horrible London," and of the bitter cry of its abject. What makes these slums so horrible? I answer, with the certainty and the confidence of one who knows, Drink! And what is the remedy? I tell you that every remedy you attempt will be a miserable failure; I tell the nation, with the conviction founded on experience, that there will be no remedy till you save these outcasts from the temptations of drink. Leave the drink, and you might build palaces for them in vain. Leave the drink, and before a year was over your palaces would still reek with dirt and squalor, with infamy and crime. Of the trade in general which ministers to this temptation I will say nothing; but at least in such vile streets as these, whence, day and night, this bitter cry of abject cities rings in the ears of the Lord God of Sabbath, I should have thought that any man who believes in God, that any man who calls himself a Christian, would have been, not ashamed only, but afraid to swell those geysers of curse and ruin. In such districts, at any rate, I know not how they can be blind to the evils which spring from what they sell, or how they can fail to hear the stern words ringing in their ears—

"Fye, sirrah,  
The evil that thou causeth to be done,  
That is thy means to live."

They who will not see this must be left to their own conscience, in that hour which she speaks, and we can be deaf no longer to her voice; but I ask every man concerned in such evils, which is best?—which will they think best when, a few years hence, they face the hour of death and the day of judgment, to forego such tainted gains, or to go on contributing—to the whole sale manufacture of infamy that knows no innocence; of youth without modesty or shame; of maturity that is mature in nothing but guilt and suffering; of blasted old age which is a scandal on the name we bear?

6. But the tempted, the victims of drink—I ask you, do these men, these women, do these children, do these wretched districts, or do they not deserve our pity, and demand our efforts at reform? Is it, or is it not—surely the question is plain and pressing—our duty to content ourselves with clever epigrams and plausible sophisms, and to be infinitely tender to vested interests in the cause of human ruin; or with stern effort and inflexible perseverance, to reduce an evil so colossal, to redeem men, our brothers, from a misery so deep as this?

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