

But whilst it is now generally conceded that the term luxury can be used only relatively of other articles, our high license advocate assumes that alcohol is an absolute luxury, and a pernicious one at that, always, everywhere and to all. If his assumption is correct, it is strange that nature has implanted in mankind a universal appetite for this stimulant, and at the same time has created abundant means, everywhere, for gratifying that appetite. This is not her way of working in other matters. Every other appetite or passion or desire has its legitimate use; and although by excessive indulgence it may become morbid and pernicious, still under proper control it effects its share in the upward progress and civilization of the human race. Sir William Roberts, M.D., in his work on "Food Accessories," says, speaking of alcohol, tea and other stimulants:—

"These generalized food customs of mankind are not to be viewed as random practices adopted to please the palate or gratify our idle or vicious appetite. These customs must be regarded as the outcome of profound instincts, which correspond to the important wants of the human economy."

Surely these sentiments are more wise, and, let us add, more honouring to the Great Creator, than such as represent Him creating an appetite in men and furnishing them everywhere with abundant means of gratifying it, simply and solely to set a trap for them whereby they may be ruined. And then, when we look into the past and present history of the whole human race, we do not find that this appetite has created such havoc as our temperance orators would have us believe. The alcohol-consuming nations have always been, and are to-day, the conquering nations, the progressive nations, the civilizing nations; and Mr. George says truly in his essay: "There is no instance in which intemperance among a civilized people has stopped advance and turned civilization back towards barbarism, but the history of the world furnishes example after example in which this has occurred from the corruption of government."

There is another aspect of this question that must be considered, viz., that alcohol is an absolute necessity of life to a very large proportion of our community. That is, for those with bronchial troubles, lung troubles and weak hearts—teetotal writers themselves being witnesses. It has a function which no other kind of food possesses; it is "a readily oxidizable fuel-food;" it is "the savings bank of the tissues;" it is just what all such invalids require daily; any other thing which has been devised as a substitute is but a miserable make-shift.

The question then arises: Is there not great injustice done certain people by calling what is to them an absolute "necessity of life" a "luxury," and by making it, through every artifice of taxation, a most burdensome expense to them? And these people are by no means few in number. About eleven per cent. of the deaths in Ontario are caused by consumption, and as to heart disease, the increase of that malady in the last twenty years of "temperance" is something positively alarming. We would do well to enquire how much of that increase may be attributed to that false temperance sentiment which has prevented many from taking what they ought to take, and which has made it almost impossible for the poor to prolong their lives and alleviate their sufferings with the alcohol which they need—because it is called a "luxury," and made frightfully dear.

Temperance papers rejoice over the fact that the amount of alcohol consumed per head is diminishing. But if lives are shortened, and heart and lung diseases are increasing, that is poor consolation. Those same papers are also loud in their complaints of the immense amount of money "wasted," "lost," "sunk" in "the nation's drink bill." That bill is much too large, we confess, but what makes it so? Into what gulf is all that money "sunk"? The largest part of it goes into the treasury of the nation, in order to pay the expenses of its Government. It helps to pay the salaries of the M.P.'s—even of the prohibitionist M.P.'s. Let us take an extreme case—the case of a confirmed drunkard, a worthless creature, who renders his home miserable and ruins himself body and soul. Let us say he consumes one hundred gallons of common whiskey in the year; that is a pretty liberal allowance, we suppose. At \$2 a gallon that would be \$200 a year. But, if let alone to the natural course of things, that same amount of whiskey would only have cost him some \$25. Where does the balance go? The man "loses," "wastes," "sinks" some \$175 more than he need, in order to help pay the salaries of the M.P.'s for his country. Would not that money be better spent by his unfortunate wife for her home? Surely she suffers enough, day by day, all her life long, by having a sot for her husband, without adding to her burdens by taxing her to this extent. Surely some one else could better afford to keep up the salaries of the M.P.'s.

It is still worse if we think of the poor consumptive or victim of heart disease. I can point out a dozen such cases within ten minutes walk of my own door. They are too weak in body to earn a fair living. An ounce or two of alcohol every day would prolong their lives, ease their sufferings, and enable them to fulfil their daily tasks. But they cannot take it regularly; it costs too much. Or if they do take it, as a matter of duty and necessity, it nearly ruins them—that all-devouring excise fattens on them—the M.P.'s must draw their salaries. Is this fair? And we would like to know, who enjoys the "luxury"—the poor consumptive or the prohibitionist M.P.—out of "the nation's drink bill"?

Prohibition we can understand if we grant its premises: that alcohol is universally and invariably pernicious, for rich and poor, for sick and well, alike. "Free rum" we can understand on the ground that, where beneficial, the poor should enjoy it as well as the rich; and where pernicious the rich should refrain from it as much as the poor. But this heavily taxing, by all manners of ways, an article which is naturally cheap, and so making it artificially dear on the ground of its being a "luxury," is like saying: "This is an article which we decree that the rich may use, but the poor must not."

Is it not high time that we were governed by rules of sound sense, and not by "gush"? Geo. J. Low.

HISTORY IN AN ODD CORNER.*

ONLY the student of history knows in what queer places history may be found. The maker of books goes to books and to books only for his material, but the historian—pure and simple—often finds himself in musty corners, cobwebbed attics, old hair trunks, abandoned desks, and among other of the *disjecta membra* of modern life.

The bits of history I take the liberty of bringing to your notice on the present occasion I found in a queerer place than any of these—on the back of an old picture.

The picture itself is one that would commend itself to any member of this Society, and therefore I take no credit to myself that when I found a coloured view of Niagara Falls in an old-fashioned frame, leaning in a corner of a second-hand store, I should be interested in it; nor do I betray the actual value of the picture—which I regard as invaluable, having got it—when I state the sum I paid for it, all that was asked, the magnificent art price of thirty cents.

There was nobody to be benefited had I offered ten times as much (which I would willingly have paid), and so I took my picture home, proudly conscious of what is said to be a woman's delight—perhaps because we seldom have much to spend—a bargain.

Having the pleasure of knowing the head of the Falls through my visits at Drummondville, and knowing therefore "how the water comes down," not at Lodore, as Southey sang, but at Niagara, I at once recognized the value of my picture by the delicate delineation of the falling water and the spray. The shore on the opposite side was familiar to me by the truth of its outline, though only two out of the score or more of large erections at present so prominent are given in the picture.

Moreover I was charmed by the foliage depicted: a couple of ancient fir-trees, with a spruce or two, many second-growth oaks, and some bushes and wild-wood plants, all beautifully drawn and as beautifully coloured. I am told that my picture is a mezzo-tint.

The foreground of the view is Goat Island, as a dedicatory inscription pasted on the back of the old bevelled plain gilt frame tells, and the artist has drawn two of the long-haired, long-horned animals quietly resting in close proximity to a picnic party, consisting of three ladies and a gentleman; a wicker basket at hand, the contents decently covered with a napkin, suggesting refreshments.

Near to the party, comes down a large cataract, the very brink of which is reached by a bridge, with a hand-rail laid upon big boulders, some of which appear to be ready to tumble in the abyss below.

No date accompanies the inscription of the picture, and we are left to judge it from the accessories, and from these we set it at about sixty years since, for, as we see by the costume of two of the ladies, who are probably the daughters of the lady and gentleman in front of them, it was the epoch of low-necked dresses, short sleeves and waists, and straight narrow skirts. The young ladies also wear mob-caps, but the elder lady wears bangs, as the moderns call them, and a high Spanish comb, such as my mother used to wear, and also, as my mother did at her wedding, a pelisse of silk or satin, over a muslin dress cut low, a kerchief delicately folded across the bust, and long loose sleeves.

Over her head the lady holds a parasol of the mandarin type, as regards the absence of the tense expansion to which we are accustomed now, and, I am sure, if we could be permitted to examine its elegantly carved ivory handle, we should find it jointed on to an upper section of light wood, over which would slip a tubular piece of metal to keep the joint firm, or to leave it loose when the lady desired to carry the parasol closed.

Nor is the costume of the gentleman of the party less typical. His coat is a frock, buttoning tight at the waist, and having silk-faced lapels and collar that turn back far enough to display the waistcoat, which cannot fail to be of Nankin, or else of embroidered, cachemire, probably the work of the fair girls, his daughters. The artist has depicted the spotless white jean trousers very clearly, and we are sure, by the way they sit over the boots, that they are held in place by straps. The high black satin stock also is not to be overlooked; nor the whiskers, which have come into fashion again lately, as have some other of the details before mentioned. The hat is similar to that worn by little boys when I was a little girl, having a wide peak standing out square and flat, a deep head-band and a "muffin" crown.

* Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Pioneer and Historical Association for the Province of Ontario, held at Brampton, 3rd June, 1891; also at a Meeting of the York Pioneers, on 2nd November, 1891.

And now, if I have not wearied you with the picture, we will proceed to the history on its back. The most important is the inscription written in the old-fashioned elegant copper plate, with its graceful turns and flourishes—the name of the picture is, however, in Roman double-line capitals, NIAGARA FALLS. The inscription reads: "Dixon, Esq., this View of the British Fall taken from Goat Island is respectfully Inscribed by His Obedient Serv't, HENRY J. MEGAREY." None of us present, I am sure, have to think twice to assign the surname Dixon—the previous name being cut off on the inscription—to the right family, and some may know who the artist was. I do not. Both surnames, however, open up more history.

The special history to which I call your attention is contained in newspaper strips cut and pasted over the joinings of the stretcher and the picture frame proper, a careful way of framing which seems to have gone out of fashion with the incoming of cheap art.

Happily the date of the newspaper is given—for the historian loves dates; they are to his facts what the anchor is to the ship, forbidding them to float aimlessly and insecurely about. The name of the paper is *The Morning Courier*, and its date August 8, 1836. The page thus given us to read, by being employed half a century ago for such apparently trifling a purpose, consists of advertisements in which we may recognize certain names that are known to-day; the most familiar among them being perhaps that of Mrs. Burland—no doubt the mother of the Burlands whose name is so well known in our commerce. This lady's "two storey house, near the Ordnance Office, fronting the Island St. Helen's," is advertised for sale by M. E. David, Great St. James Street. There is little need to remark that the paper was published at Montreal.

Next comes an advertisement of an ironmonger's store to let for a year or more, an old stand, well-known, and "presently occupied by Mr. Canfield Dorwin," who, we are at liberty to suppose, is retiring from business after the "thirty years in the same trade" that the advertisement mentions as an item of value. The location is given as at a corner, one of the streets being St. Eloi Street, the name of the other being pasted over.

Notices of removal are also given; one to premises adjoining those of Le Mesurier, Routh and Co.; another to those "lately occupied by Messrs. Kay, Whitehead and Co."

Perhaps the most important advertisements are those of sales of imports, from which we may learn the class of goods Canadian merchants brought in—all by way of England if I judge correctly from the terms of the advertisements. These imports comprised all groceries, spices, wines, liquors and some ales, all superior kinds of dry goods, all stationery, commercial or other; ropes, twines, hardware, silverware "in services," as one list announces, reminding us of the handsome hospitality Canada was wont to offer her visitors even at private and unofficial tables.

Many of the brands, particularly of spirits, cited are familiar to us to-day: Hennessy, Martel and others, and for our Dutch compatriots the favourite Schiedam. On Alexander H. Cass and Co.'s list stand whiskey—"Campbelton" brand, for which "Bonnie Argyle" may have been godfather; then we have Indigo, "Madras" brand; "Isinglass English, first quality" brand; "candles, wax-wick, sperm and wax," so long superseded by coal oil, but now in favour again with rich aesthetes, who are, however, supplied with stearine instead of sperm, made by ourselves. Then we have shot, "assorted No. 1," and visions of deer and bear shooting, of wild geese, swans and ducks, of hunting-lodges in the vast wilderness and of the savage enemies to be kept in check, instantly rise before us.

And what memories are awakened by the item of playing cards, brands "Mogul" and "Highlander"—the fat old Turk in his turban, and the haughty Highlander in his plaid which, if I remember right, was black barred with green, and his checked red and white hose tied at the knees. Surely these were the picture cards of Governor Simcoe's parties, of many a hob-and-nob by the farm-house hearth, and of the camp-fire and lumber shanty of the woods.

Our mouths are made to water by the items in Bellingham and Dunlop's list of Twankay, Hyson, Skin, and Souchong, despite our Oolong, uncoloured Japan and other teas of to-day, for which, however, we do not pay three guineas a pound as our grandmothers did.

It seems curious to see London glue, feathers and olive oil classed together, the idea of importing feathers ostensibly for beds, since feathers for millinery and decoration must have been invoiced among ribbons and laces, is rather amusing to us, accustomed to raise our own geese and chickens; but we must remember that half a century ago the farmer had to import his domestic poultry, and even among his neighbours on the other side these possessions were by no means numerous. Rose nails, horse nails, hemp, shoe-thread, candle-wick, flannel and hats have been in a measure supplanted as important items of importation by the manufacture among ourselves of a great proportion of the supply needed; but still they are not, and perhaps never will be, quite removed from the importer's lists.

We open our eyes wide, however, to see on Atkinson and Co.'s list the items "Dr. Nott's Stoves" and "Anthracite Coal." It is hard to realize now the condition of things when stoves needed to be imported, particularly when we recall that the American range or cooking stove was but lately, within a score of years, introduced into the English market. We are ready to ask whether Dr. Nott's stove was the model of the Davy Crockett, so familiar to our recent past, and now superseded by the handsome nickle-plated stoves and ranges from the numerous foundries throughout the older provinces.