

is that the annual consumption of distilled liquors and beer has increased so as to alarm good citizens. The annual consumption of distilled liquors is 12½ quarts for each of the 5,500,000 inhabitants, or 268 quarts of beer—a consumption almost twice as great as that of Germany. There is one public house for every 44 inhabitants; and crimes and suicides have trebled in 40 years. The Europeans should study carefully the experiment of prohibition going on in this country. Prohibition is gaining in public favor from the results reached in Kansas, Georgia and other states.—*Western Wave.*

JAPAN.—The pastor of a Methodist church in the North of Japan has contributed to the *Christian Weekly*, of Tokio, a notable article on sake-drinking. Besides ably discussing the question in sanitary and religious aspects, he gives some striking and interesting facts. It seems that the Chinese Emperor Buo, three thousand years ago, was a radical temperance reformer. His laws on the subject were very strict, and their violation was punished by death. This system somewhat modified, was afterwards introduced into Japan, where it remained in force nearly a thousand years. But its influence has long since been lost. To-day intemperance is one of the growing and desperate evils in Japan. The Japanese spend yearly 80,000,000 yen, or more than \$60,000,000 for sake, in the manufacture of which 26,000,000 bushels of rice are consumed, or almost one-fifth of the total yield of the country, leaving a short allowance for food, and none for export. This one drink costs the people as much as does their entire government. The temperance question is, then, for Japan, as for many another more Christian land, a very serious and pressing one, which we hope the present large outpouring of the Spirit will do much to solve.

Tales and Sketches.

THE YOUNG ENGINEER.

A MOTHER'S STORY.

"The young man you met at the gate, eh? Yes, that is my son—my boy Jack.

"You noticed the scars on his face, sir, and thought, maybe, they spoiled features meant to be handsome?"

"Ah, sir! that was because you did not know! Why, those red marks make him more beautiful to me now than when, a baby in arms, with yellow curls and laughing eyes and a skin like a rose leaf, and the people hurrying in and out of the trains would turn to look and smile at him and praise, to each other, speaking low, maybe, but not too low for a mother's quick, proud ears to hear!

"For we lived in a little house close by the station, and when I heard the whistle of his father's train, I used to snatch the baby from the cradle, or off the floor where he sat with his little playthings, and run down to the further end of the long depot where the engine always halted, to get the smile and loving word that my heart lived on all day.

"Not the least bit afraid was the baby of all the whistling and clanging of bells, the groaning of the wheels and the puffing of the steam. He would laugh and spring so in my arms that I could scarcely hold him, till his father would reach down sometimes and lift him up into the engineer's cab, and kiss him for one precious minute and then toss him down to me again.

"When he grew a little older, he was never playing horse or soldiers, like the other fellows around; it was always a railway train he was driving. All the smoothest strips out of my billets of kindling wood went to build tracks over the kitchen floor hither and thither, crossing and recrossing each other.

"Can't move my switch, mother dear!" he used to cry out to me. "You'll wreck my train for sure!"

"So I had to go softly about my work, with scarce a place sometimes to set my foot. And all the chairs in the house would be ranged for cars, the big rocker, with the tea bell tied to its back, for the engine; and there he would sit perched up by the hour together, making believe to attend the valves and shouting to the fireman.

"I shall never forget the first time his father took him to ride on the engine. John had begged over and over to go, but his father always bade him wait till he was older. So I had said.—

"Don't tease father any more, Jack dear," and like the true little heart he was, he had not said another word about it for a matter of six months or more.

But that day such a wistful look came into his face, and he

pulled himself up tall and straight, and said, quite softly, his voice trembling a little, "Father, do you think I am grown enough now?"

"Looking at him, I saw two tears in his pretty eyes. I think his father saw them, for he turned to me in a hurry, and said he,—

"We meet the up train at Langton, Mary, and Will Brown will bring the little chap back all straight, I know. What do you say?"

"What could I say but yes? At supper time he was back again, but he could not eat. His eyes were like stars, and there was a hot, red spot on each cheek, so that I feared he would be ill. And I thought he would never be done talking, but now he said scarce a word.

"What was it like, Jackie?" I asked him.

"Oh mother!" he said, "it wasn't like anything." He sat for a moment thinking, then he said, "unless it was like—that you read last Sunday."

"Don't you know, mother?" "The wings of the wind!"

"That was not his last ride on the engine by many times, for as he grew older, his father would take him often on Saturday, or other half-holidays. He was perfectly trusty and obedient. I believe he would have had his right hand cut off sooner than have meddled with anything; but he knew every valve and screw and gauge, and watched every turn of his father's hand, and learned the signals all along the line, so that my husband said to me more than once.—

"I believe in my heart, Mary, that if I was struck dead on the engine, Jack could run her through without a break!"

"He was in school and learning fast but out of hours he was always studying over books about machinery and steam. Such an odd child as he was, with thoughts far beyond his years!

"Sometimes sitting here by myself, I go over in my mind the strange things he used to say to me.

"I remember that one evening he had been reading for a long time in some book that he had got out of the public library; but by and by he stopped and leaned his head on his hand, looking into the coals. All at once—

"Mother," said he, "isn't it a wonderful thing that God could trust men with it?"

"With what, Jack?"

"With the steam—the power in it I mean! It was a long time before he did. But when the right time came, and somebody listened, then he told."

"O mother!" said he, with his eyes shining, "What must it have been to be James Watt, and to listen to such a secret as that?"

"In a minute he spoke again."

"And it is never safe to forget to listen, because we can't know when he might speak, or what there might be to hear."

"I could not answer him for a choking in my throat, but I laid down my knitting and I put my arms around him; and he looked up into my face with something in his eyes that I never forgot."

"We were getting on well then. The little home and garden were almost paid for, and we thought that nowhere in the world were happier people than we, or a brighter, cosier home. My husband and I were always talking of this and that to be done for Jack as soon as the last payment should be made. But before the money was due my husband came home sick one day.

"Don't be frightened, Mary," he said, "I shall be better to-morrow."

"But he only grew worse next day. It was a lung fever that he had, and many days we thought he must die. Yet he rallied after a time—though he kept his hacking cough—and sat up and moved about the house, and at last thought himself strong enough to take his place again. But that was too much, for at the end of the first week he came home and fell, fainting, on the threshold.

"It's of no use, Mary," he said, after he came to himself. "I can't run the engine, and if I could, it isn't right for people's lives to be trusted to such weak hands as mine!"

"He never did any regular work after that, though he lived for a year."

"Consumption is a terrible disease, sir! To see one that you would give your heart's blood to save slipping, slipping away before your eyes, and you helpless to hold him back by so much as a hair's breadth from that black gulf of death; ah, sir! I trust you have never learned how hard it is.

"Young as he was, Jack was my stay and comfort through that dark time. My poor husband had matters in his mind that he longed to speak to me about, but I always put him off, for I could not bear to listen to anything like his going away from us.

"But at last, the very day before the end came, as I sat by his